

Ācārya Madhva was born in this unknown hamlet. This inconspicuous village came to be celebrated as a holy place of pilgrimage by the birth of this Ācārya. It came to be known as 'Pājaka-Kṣetram'.

We should go back 745 years from now. As many as 4338 years have passed since the inception of Kali-Yuga<sup>3</sup> and the 4339<sup>th</sup> year is running.

indiscriminately breaking the rocks, thereby spoiling the historic beauty and serenity. A new organization by name Pājaka Foundation is striving hard to protect the village and to rejuvenate its hoary past and culture. There is a unique temple of Paraśurāma on a rock in front of the house where Śrī Madhvācārya was born. Just by the side of it there is hillock known as Kunjārūgiri, with a shrine of Goddess Durga on the top. In ancient works this hillock is recorded as Vimāna Giri. [Madhva Vijaya 2-11]. Beyond the hillock is the border of the Belle village. As soon as we cross the border we step into the area known as Pāje Halli. The Sanskritized form of this name is Pājaka and hence the place came to be designed as Pājaka Kṣetram.

3. Aṇu Madhvacarita records this in clear terms:

**trīṣatābdottara-catuh-sahasrābdhebhya uttare |**  
**ekona catvāriṃśābde vilambi-parivatsare |**  
**aśvīna-śukla-daśami-divase bhuvi-pāvane |**  
**pājakākhye śucikṣetre durgayā cābhivīkṣate |**  
**jāto madhyāhna-velāyām budhavāre maruttanuḥ || [Aṇu.ma.ca.2.4]**

According to this Ācārya Madhva was born in 4339 kali Era [1238 A.D.]. Śrī Ācārya himself has revealed his time of birth in his Mahābhārata Tātparya Nirṇaya thus:

**catuḥ-sahasre trīṣatottare gate**  
**sarṇvatsarāṇām tu kalau prthivyām**  
**jātaḥ punar-vipratanuḥ sa bhīmaḥ**  
**daityair-nigūḍham haritatvam-āha || [Ma.bhā.tā.ni.32.120]**

Some scholars infer from this statement that 4300 Kali Era [1199 A.D.] is the year of his birth. In fact Śrī Ācārya has simply said here that he was born after the Kali Era 4300. This only indicates the round figure, and not the figure 39 after the beginning of the century. The statement does not answer the question as to which exactly is the year after 4300 Kali Era. Another work Aṇu Madhvacarita answers this in exact terms by mentioning the year 39. Another statement of Śrī Ācārya lends support to this:

**bhūśrī-bhinnāki-cintyonāt kalyahāt kālavardhitāt |**

**garuḍadhyeya vākyaṭam tyaktvā sauram vṛthāphalam ||**

**[tithi nirṇaya: 2]**

The stanza explains the method to be employed while making astronomical calculations about the dates and times. Ācārya records here the year of his composing the work. The calculations are as follows:

**bhūśrī-bhinnāki-cintya x kāla**  
**garuḍadhyeya**

The corresponding letter numbers are:

$$\frac{16,10,424 \times 31}{11323} = 4409$$

Accordingly Śrī Ācārya composed the work in 4409 Kali era. If 4300 is the year of his birth we have to presume that he composed it in his 109th year. But it is historically known that he lived for 79 years.

**ēkonāsīti-varṣāni bhūtvā mānuṣadr̥ṣṭigah |**

**piṅgalābde māgha-śuddha-navamyām badarīm yayau ||**

**[Aṇu.ma.ca.10]**

Hence it is more appropriate to believe that he was born in 4339 Kali Era. Śrī Narahari Tirtha's Śrī Kūrma Inscription [Epigraphia Indica Vol. vi-25] seems to support this view. As per these evidences it is clear that, Śrī Ācārya was 70 years when he composed Tithi-nirṇaya. [4339704409. i.e. 1308 A.D].

Indeed, the Vijayadaśami following Navarātri, in the bright half of the month Āśvayuja in the year Vilambi (1238 A.D) is a day of great festivity. On that afternoon, Ācārya Madhva was born<sup>4</sup> in this tiny hamlet of Karnāṭaka. The name given to the child by his father was 'Vāsudeva'.

Ācārya's father belonged to the family of 'Naḍillāya'<sup>5</sup>. Nārāyaṇa Paṇḍitācārya who documented the biography of Ācārya has not mentioned the names of Ācārya's parents. But it is believed by some that the father's name was Naḍillāya Nārāyaṇa-bhaṭṭa and the mother's name Vedavafī.

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Ācārya Madhva's date of birth is also recorded in certain kaifiyats of the Maṭhas and other works. Since they do not tally with one another, none of them can be taken as authoritative statements. Scholars like Manjeśvara Govinda Pai and C.M. Padmanābhācārya have accepted 4339 Kali Era as the year of Śrī Madhvācārya's birth.

4. There is controversy about the date and the month of his birth also. Some records proclaim Vijayadaśami, day in Āśvin month and other record Māgha-śuddha-saptami. It is difficult to come to any conclusion until we come across a reliable evidence. But oral traditions speak of Vijayadaśami as the birth day of Śrī Ācārya. The almanacs also record Vijayadaśami as the birth day of Śrī Ācārya. Hence the evidence found in Aṇumadhvacarita seems to be more reliable. Regarding the name of the day also one can observe that Vijayadaśami does not fall on Wednesday as observed by the author of Aṇumadhvacarita, but on Monday.

5. Naḍillāya is a Tulu word meaning a man of middle house. This is sometimes wrongly recorded as Naḍyantillāya. The Sanskritized form of this word is Madhyageha Bhatta.

## Pūrṇaprajña: Ānandatīrtha: Madhva

Even from childhood, the religious student Vāsudeva had spiritual learning; he was drawn to the path of renunciation. Further, he possessed an extraordinary intelligence.

While his parents were eager to prepare him to setup a family, Vāsudeva went away from home and family, thinking that the entire universe was his home. Even as a young boy of eleven years, he chose initiation into the monastic order from Acyuta-prajña, a reputed ascetic of the time, near Uḍupi, in the year Soumya (1249 A.D)<sup>6</sup>. The preceptor Acyuta-prajña<sup>7</sup> gave the boy

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6. bhū-sutendropanīto yastata ekā-daśābdake |

saumye jagrāha bhagavān-stuṛiyāśramamuttamam || [Aṇu.ma.ca.5]

7. Some modern writers have wrongly recorded this name as Acyutaprekṣa. A stanza of Madhva Vijaya is responsible for this misconception.

na nāma-mātrat-śucimarthatopi yam |

janocyuta prekṣamudāharat sphutam || [Ma.vi.4,6]

But in the commentary on this stanza Vedaṅgatīrtha writes like this 'acyuta prekṣam acyutaprajña nāmānam-ityarthah'. Evidently Nārāyaṇa Paṇḍita, the author of Madhvavijaya used the word Achyutaprekṣa to indicate that people used to respect this saint as if he had the vision of Lord Acyuta. This kind of change of epithets is noticed elsewhere also.

Instead of the name Pūrṇaprajña the author of Madhva Vijaya employs the epithet, Pūrṇabodha also [Madhva Vijaya 4.33].

Moreover, Nārāyaṇa paṇḍita himself wrote a commentary Bhāva-prakāśikā to Madhvavijaya. He explains the word this way. 'Acyuta prekṣah, prekṣā prajñā pratibheti'. In another place he explains it in clear terms as: 'Acyute ātmā buddhiḥ prajñā asyeti acyutātmā acyutaprajñah'.

Another stanza in the guruparamparā tradition also confirms this.

vamsasyādin sanakādin-upāse

dūrvāsam-paratīrthakhyabhikṣum |

Vāsudeva the name of 'Pūrṇaprajña' at the time of initiation into sannyāsa.

Only within forty days of his initiation into sannyāsa, a very remarkable episode occurred in Ācārya's career. Expert scholars in Tarka (Logic) of the nation-wide fame, such as Vāsudeva-panḍita, arrived in Uḍupi in the course of their search for a competitor who might conquer them in debate. This proud scholar who had sounded his drum of victory everywhere in the country was defeated by the little monk Pūrṇaprajña.

Rejoicing at the extraordinary brilliance of the little monk, his preceptor Acyuta-prajña, consecrated Pūrṇaprajña as the head of the empire of Vedānta and conferred on him the title 'Ānandatīrtha'.

Another time, a Buddhist scholar visited the holy centre of Acyuta-prajña. He was accompanied by another scholar, Vādisimha, who had embraced Buddhism after his defeat by Buddhisāgara in a philosophical debate, though he was originally a follower of Vedic religion.

Pūrṇaprajña silenced both these Buddhist scholars who had travelled all over the country winning certificates of victory in philosophical debates. The joy of Acyuta-prajña was boundless. The little Ānandatīrtha conferred by him on Pūrṇaprajña, at the time of the latter's consecration function became indeed meaningful.

Thus Pūrṇaprajña is the Ācārya's name given to him at the time of sannyāsa. The name conferred on him at the time of consecration as the master of Vedānta is 'Ānandatīrtha'. And the

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**satyaprajñam prājña-tīrtham ca paścāt  
paścācchiṣyān acyutaprajña-madhvau ||**

Even among the earlier saints the word 'Prajña' was in vogue, Satyaprajña is an example. The name of Madhvācārya is also Pūrṇaprajña, hence it is quite appropriate to believe that the original name of the saint was Acyutaprajña.

favorite nom de plume assumed by him by choice is the Vedic name 'Madhva'. Ācārya gained publicity later on by this favorite name itself, traceable to Vedas<sup>8</sup>.

## Southern Tour

Ācārya set out on a tour of South India even in his teens. He visited prominent places of pilgrimage like Anantaśayana, Kanyākumāri, Rāmeśvara and Śrīraṅga. Wherever he went, he delivered discourses and preached the message of his Tatva-vāda or religious truth to the people. This initiated a new discussion among the scholars all over India. Ācārya refuted in clear terms a few age-old beliefs. He stated that spirituality should not be mixed up with superstitions. As a result, there was hot opposition to him from some orthodox extremists. But Ācārya braved it all with courage, without yielding to any flimsy threats.

The urge which was deeply surging in the heart of Ācārya for a long, turned into a firm resolve as a result of this tour. 'The superstitions on the way in search of the philosophical truth should be wiped out! My whole life should be dedicated to propagate the ultimate truth'.

The first task accomplished by Ācārya as soon as he returned to Uḍupi, after adopting this firm resolve, was the composing of a commentary (Bhāṣya) on the Bhagavadgītā.

## The call of Badari

In course of time, Ācārya desired to tour North India and to spread the message of Vedic religion far and wide. The holy centre of Badari beckoned to him irresistibly. Fired by the wish to visit holy places like Vyāsa's hermitage, the penance-grove of

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### 8. yaḍīmanu pradivo madhva ādhave

guhāsantam mātariśvā mathāyati

|| [rg-veda 1.141.3]

Nara-Nārāyaṇa etc., and to present his commentary of Gīta as a tribute to sage Vyāsa, Ācārya moved straight to Badari. There he observed a vow of strict silence for 48 days, bathing in the holy Gaṅgā. And then he set out alone towards Vyāsa Badari, his cherished destination.

After his return from there, the task of writing a commentary on the Brahma-sūtras came to be undertaken by Ācārya. Ācārya never wrote any work of his by hand. It was his practice to dictate continuously to his disciples who would take them down. His composition of works was as facile as his discourse. A disciple of Ācārya, by name Satyafirtha, recorded it in palm leaves, whatever was dictated by Ācārya.

In the meantime, Ācārya's influence had spread far and wide throughout the country. Scholars all over India were stunned by his extra-ordinary genius, never seen or heard of before. The circle of his disciples grew bigger and bigger. Some ascetics got initiation from him and were admitted into the order of sannyāsa. Once while returning from Badari, Ācārya was camping enroute in a holy place on the banks of Godāvari. Here he was accosted by an eminent pundit, by the name Sobhana-bhaṭṭa. This person was well known in that region as a peerless scholar. This visit changed the entire career of the man. Seeing the extraordinary personality of Ācārya, and listening to his wonderful discourses, he was so much overwhelmed that he became Ācārya's disciple and joined his retinue.

Acyutaprajña's cup of happiness was full on seeing Ācārya Madhva back home after his resounding victory in all parts of the country and on his rich retinue of disciples hailing from different places. Though in the beginning he too had his own doubts about Ācārya's view of ultimate reality (Tatva-vāda), at this stage, he became a whole-hearted adherent of Ācārya's new philosophy.

### Installation of Kṛṣṇa - Return to Badari

The Ācārya who stayed in the environs of Uḍupi for some more time authored his bhāṣyas or authoritative commentaries on all

the ten Upaniṣats. He composed glosses on forty sūktas of Rg-Veda, opening up for the first time its vista of spiritual significance. He also authored the treatise Bhāgavata-tātparya highlighting the essential teachings of the Purāṇas. Many contextual handbooks that were relevant to the occasion were also authored by him. A large number of devotional songs which could be sung by his disciples while moving with him in groups, were also composed by him.

It was during this period that Ācārya installed the image of Kṛṣṇa<sup>9</sup> which he found in the western ocean near the Uḍupi sea-

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9. The popular legend among the devotees is as follows: A cargo ship loaded at Dwāraka was proceeding towards the south. When the ship was passing through Malpe, there arose a tempest and the captain cried out for successor. Śrī Ācārya, engaged in meditation at the sea-shore heard this and waved his bark garment towards him. The tempest subsided. The captain sailed in the direction of the garment that was waved towards him and saluted the saint and requested him to accept any commodity that he desires from the ship as a mark of his gratitude. Ācārya did not accept any money of gold but took out only a lump of Gopi-mud. A lovely idol of Kṛṣṇa found inside the lump of mud was later on established at Uḍupi.

The source of this legend is not known. No ancient work supports this legend. It must be of recent origin. The 19th pontiff of Śrī Palimāru maṭha (18th century) Śrī Raghuvarya-firtha gives a different version of the story in his commentary on Aṇu Madhvavijaya.

**“dwārakāyām rugmini-vanākhyā-pradeśe gopīcandana-madhye lagnām gopīcandana-buddhyāsām-yātrikairānītām rūpya-pīṭha-samīpe plave bhinne jaladhau magnām śrīkṛṣṇapratiṁmā-ānīya.....maṭhe pratiṣṭhāpayāmāsa |”.**

According to this statement the ship carrying the idol of Kṛṣṇa from Dwāraka wrecked at the sea near Uḍupi. Śrī Ācārya took it out from the bottom of the sea and established it in Uḍupi. This legend seems to be more ancient and more trust-worthy. We can

coast. After sometime, he left some disciples behind for performing Kṛṣṇa's worship and undertook his second tour of Badari.

Once Ācārya had to cross the river Gaṅgā. The other bank was under Muslim rule. Although stopped by the Muslim soldiers on the other side, Ācārya boldly crossed the river and reached the other bank. He was taken before the Muslim ruler<sup>10</sup> and who was filled with wonder by the boldness of the ascetic. Ācārya said: "I worship that father who illuminates the entire universe; and so do you. Are we not both children of that only God? Why should I fear then either your soldiers or you?"

Hearing such words for the first time from the mouth of a Hindu monk, the Muslim king was astounded. He was filled with reverence for this unique monk. He begged the Ācārya to stay permanently in his kingdom and offered gifts of several jāgirs. But Ācārya who was free from worldly cravings, rejected the offer and walked on to Badari, with the monk's staff in his hand.

Once when his party was attacked by a band of robbers on the difficult road to Himalayas, Ācārya made his pupil Upendra-tīrtha silence them after a fierce fight. He used to say: 'One should cultivate strength of body even like strength of mind; it is impossible for a weak body to house a strong mind'.

Accordingly he had made his disciples achieve physical strength as well as the strength in their Vedantic pursuit.

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consider this as authentic record since it was written by a traditional pontiff. The popular story of the tempest, like that of Kṛṣṇa's image turning towards the west for Kanakadāsa, must be a later invention by the local sthala-purāṇa writers.

10. Very little is known about this Muslim ruler. Some believe that he must be Balban. But considering the fact that this is an incident that had occurred during the old age of Ācārya this must have occurred during the reign of Jalāluddīn Khiljī (1290-97 A.D.) or Allauddīn Khiljī (1297-1316 A.D.).

To the people of that time, Ācārya's physical strength itself was something miraculous, because his body was strong and adamant. Even to this day, the huge rock-boulder lifted up and placed in the river Bhadrā by Ācārya near Kaḷasa bears witness to his herculean strength. This incident is confirmed by the sentence inscribed on that stone<sup>11</sup>.

Ācārya had the darśan of Lord Nārāyaṇa and of sage Vyāsa. On returning home, he wrote the treatise, Mahābhārata-Tātparyā-Nirṇaya. On his way home, he visited Kāśī. There he held a philosophical debate with an elderly Advaitin ascetic, Amarendra Puri. He had to go away silently, humbled by the dazzling genius of the Ācārya. Then he went to Kurukṣetra. There occurred a strange episode.

There Ācārya asked his disciples to excavate a piece of land and showed them the buried mace of Satya-tīrtha. He was a kṣatriya in his previous birth. Then, he again had it buried under the ground.

Later on, Ācārya arrived in Goa on his way back to Uḍupi. With his sweet music there he enthralled the audience. Ācārya's musical genius also was a unique as his perfect physique and brilliant intellect. Writers contemporaneous with Ācārya have rapturously acclaimed the Ācārya's musical expertise as well as his rich melody of voice.

## Everything is Unique

As already stated, Ācārya Madhva toured over the length and breadth of India twice. He propounded his philosophy of 'Theism' (Tatva-vāda) before the best scholars of the country. The whole assembly of the learned was humbled by his brilliant genius.

Ācārya rescued from oblivion several sections of the Vedic-literature which had become obsolete by his time. He also

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11. On the rock a beautiful status of Ācārya with a stick (daṇḍa) in hand is sculptured with the following inscription carved below:

**śrī madvācāryaiḥ ekahastena āñīya sthāpitā śilā |**

showed the way of synthesizing revelation (Sruti) with mythology (Purāṇa). He brought out the hidden spiritual significance in Vedic literature<sup>12</sup>. He challenged the veracity of twenty one bhāṣyas<sup>13</sup> or expositions of the Brahma-sūtras which had been vague up to his time; and made people subject them to a reconsideration.

Ācārya Madhva is a unique personality in Indian history; a multi-faceted genius. He was a matchless scholar in philosophy. He was a unique exponent in the Vedas and the Vedic literature. He was a profound specialist in ancillary Vedic branches of study like astronomy, phonetics, ritualism etc. He was highly accomplished in the science of Sculpture. He was the founder-preceptor who gave a form of its own to Karnāṭaka music. He was a great composer of musical songs, and an eloquent orator. What more? He was a man of strong body with a well-

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12. Kapāli Sāstry, a disciple of Śrī Aurobindo in his Ṛg-veda bhāṣyabhūmika writes about the commentary on Ṛg-veda by Ācārya thus: '**vedānām-adhyātma-paratā nāstīti ko nāma brūte madhva-bhaṣyeṣu jāgratsu**'.

13. The ancient texts mention these 21 commentators.

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| 1. Bhārativijaya   | 12. Piśāca         |
| 2. Saccidānanda    | 13. Vṛttikāra      |
| 3. Brahmaghoṣa     | 14. Vijaya Bhatta  |
| 4. Satānanda       | 15. Viṣṇukrānta    |
| 5. Udvarta         | 16. Vādīndra       |
| 6. Vijaya          | 17. Mādhava Dāsa   |
| 7. Rudra bhatta    | 18. Saṅkara        |
| 8. Vāmana          | 19. Bhāskara       |
| 9. Bhartṛ-prapanca | 20. Yādava Prakāśa |
| 10. Dravidācārya   | 21. Rāmānuja       |
| 11. Brahma Datta   |                    |

Among the bhāṣyas of the above mentioned philosophers, only those of Saṅkara, Bhāskara, Yādava Prakāśa and Rāmānuja are available now.

proportioned physique; a bold selfless monk with utter unconcern to all these extraordinary endowments.

Christianity too had spread slightly at the time of Ācārya. Islam had spread already to a remarkable extent in North India. In Karnāṭaka too Jainism and Vīraśaivism had taken deep root along with a plethora of other religions, the revival of Vedic religion became Ācārya's primary mission.

In this task of religious revival, even the tradition established by Ācārya was unique. He authored several works in Sanskrit devoted to distilling the essence of the Sāstras or authoritative texts to suit the learned. But those advanced treatises were hardly within the reach of the masses. Hence Ācārya, who was a great musician and composer himself, composed lyrical pieces meant to be sung in lucid Sanskrit. He got musical songs (Kīrtans) composed in Kannaḍa by his disciples and made them popular by arranging them to be recited by Bhāgavatas or professional singers.

The Kīrtana literature, inaugurated by Narahari-tīrtha grew sumptuously in the hands of later preceptors like Śrīpādarāja, Śrī Vyāsarāja and Śrī Vādirāja. The tradition of music composer monks continued till Śrī Rāghavendra Svāmin who was a profound musician on the lute (Viṇa). Thus the Vyāsa pathway grew into Dāsa pathway in Kannaḍa. This tradition yielded to the Kannaḍa region such music-saints as Śrī Purandaradāsa, Kanakadāsa, Vijayadāsa, Gopāladāsa and Jagannāthadāsa. Even women-mystics like Helavanakatte Giryamma illuminate this tradition. The original founder of this tradition of expounding the Vedic message in Kannaḍa was Ācārya Madhva; it should not be forgotten that he was the source-head of inspiration for all these later authors. It is indeed because of this far-sighted vision of Ācārya that the holy Gaṅga of dāsa sāhitya flowed in the Kannaḍa land and made the Kannaḍa literature more glorious.

Ācārya's contribution is not limited to what we noted so far. He brought into vogue a new medium of folk art in the open-air theatre known as Bhāgavatara-āta and Daśāvatārada-āta (show of ten Incarnations) through his disciple Narahari-tīrtha. This art has

continued up to our time developing into an effective medium of folk-art in the districts of North and South Canara and had received recognition in India and abroad. This art, in its turn, gave inspiration for the development of the Kūcupuḍi art form in Andhra.

The multi-faceted genius of Ācārya is indeed amazing. What is still more amazing is the fact that the Kannaḍa people are entirely unaware of the extensive contribution of this great son of Kannaḍa soil and are steeped in utter neglect of everything!

### Last Days

After his return home from the second tour, Ācārya took the lead in initiating such social reforms within the environ of Uḍupi. Although he was mature in mind and on the other side of sixty by now, he had to face some opposition in his birth place itself. A section of orthodoxy opposing his new message was still alive.

It was about this time that an Advaita ascetic, by the name Puṇḍarīka-puri, came to Uḍupi seeking a debate with Ācārya and had to go back in utter discomfiture. Meanwhile, a monk called Padmatīrtha arranged for the theft of the rare library of Ācārya, kept in the custody of one Pejattāya Saṅkara Paṇḍita in Kāsaragoḍu. Ācārya betook himself to Kāsaragoḍu and defeated Padmatīrtha in a philosophical debate.

The cream of Ācārya's thesis on that occasion was reduced to writing by the disciples. This itself became a treatise called 'Vāda' or 'Tattvodyota'. Later on, Jayasimha of Kumbāle, the king of the Tuḷu region invited Ācārya to his court and honored him by arranging for the return of his stolen library. Pejattāya Trivikrama Paṇḍitācārya, who was the royal preceptor of the time, carried on a long debate with Ācārya for several days and at last became his disciple, bowing down to the latter's greatness. He then wrote a matchless commentary called 'Tatva-Dīpikā' on Ācārya's Brahma-sūtra-bhāṣya and thus paid his tribute to Guru.

Ācārya too was equally fond of Trivikrama-Paṇḍita. It was in answer to the request of this devoted pupil that Ācārya authored

an extensive commentary in verse, viz. 'Anu-Vyākhyāna' on Brahma-sūtras. Ācārya was dictating this work to four disciples simultaneously without any break. At the same time, the composition of the work 'Nyāyavivaraṇa' was also completed.

Ācārya Madhva completed his four-monthly stay (Cāturmāsya) at Kāsaragoḍu and returned to Pājaka. There he initiated his brother into the monastic order, since he was longing for it with a deep sense of detachment. This was Śrī Viṣṇutīrtha, the first pontiff of the present-day Sodemaṭha and Subrahmaṇyamaṭha. About the same time, Sobhana-Bhaṭṭa living on the bank of Godāvāri also came to receive initiation into sannyāsa from Ācārya.

He became famous later on as Padmanābha-tīrtha, the founder of the line of pontiffs in Deśastha-maṭhas.

Both before and after the initiation of these two, several disciples from various regions of the country got their initiation into sannyāsa from Ācārya. Among them, the names of eight disciples who chose to stay on in Uḍupi as pontiffs of different maṭhas are, as under, in the order of initiation<sup>14</sup>:

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|---------------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Hr̥ṣīkeśa-tīrtha       | (Palimārū-maṭha)  |
| 2. Nara(hari)simha-tīrtha | (Ādamāru-maṭha)   |
| 3. Janārdana-tīrtha       | (Kṛṣṇāpura-maṭha) |
| 4. Upendra-tīrtha         | (Puttige-maṭha)   |
| 5. Vāmana-tīrtha          | (Śīrūr-maṭha)     |
| 6. Viṣṇu-tīrtha           | (Sode-maṭha)      |

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14. One stanza of guruparamparā mentions the names of the saints thus:

**vande hr̥ṣīkeṣam-atho nṛsimham  
janārdanam cintaya dhīr-upendram |  
śrīvāmanam saṁsmara viṣṇumemi  
śrīrāmam-anceham adhokṣajam ca ||**

7. Sṛīrāma-tīrtha (Kāṇiyūru-maṭha)

8. Adhokṣaja-tīrtha (Pejāvara-maṭha)

The other celebrated sannyāsin-disciple of Ācārya is

9. Padmanābha-tīrtha (Deśastha-maṭha)

When Padmanābha-tīrtha was initiated into sannyāsa is not definitely not known. There were several who had got initiation before him. It appears that he should have been initiated into the order sometime between the dates when these eight pontiffs were initiated into the order.

Ācārya was now seventy. Even at this age, he toured all over the district and engaged himself in educating the general public. He composed for the benefit of a good natured Brahmin, Eḍapaḍittāya, in the village of Kokkaḍa<sup>15</sup>, the literary work 'Kṛṣṇāmṛtamahārṇava'. Then he went on to Ujire and exposed there the spiritual aspect of ritualism in order to open the eyes of Brahmins who had faith in the ultimacy of rituals. This discourse itself came to be published later under the title of 'Khaṇḍārthanirṇaya' (Karmanirṇaya). Next he visited Pancalingeśvara temple at Pāranti, which he found in a dilapidated condition, without any worship or festivity. He made arrangements for the resumption of proper worship there according to the rituals prescribed in the ancient scriptures (Āgamas).

Ācārya's life span of 79 years was thus one, teeming with activity. When he thought that his life mission had been served, he put the responsibility of carrying on the tradition of this Tatva-vāda or philosophical thesis on the shoulders of his disciples and betook himself to Badari, all alone without any thought or care. The day on which he thus proceeded to Badari was the ninth in the bright

15. Viśvapati-tīrtha the commentator of Madhvavijaya calls this place Kokkaḍa. But Vedānga tīrtha the ancient commentator and Raghuvarya tīrtha, the commentator of Aṇumadhvavijaya records this as Iḍya.

half of the month Māgha in the Kali year 4418 (1317 A.D). Even now the birth anniversary of the Ācārya is celebrated as Madhva-Navami on the same day.

### The Tradition: As it developed...

The disciples of Ācārya, both pontifical and lay, continued this tradition with devout and zeal. They nourished the young plant by supplying it constantly with waters of their penance and erudition. Hundreds of dialectical treatises came to be written. Among the writers belonging to this school we may roughly classify some outstanding ones in the following chronological order: Sṛī Viṣṇu-tīrtha, Padmanābha-tīrtha, Narahari-tīrtha, Trivikrama-Paṇḍitācārya, Nārāyaṇa-Paṇḍitācārya, Vāmana-Paṇḍitācārya (Traivikramārya-dāsa)<sup>16</sup>. Jayatīrtha (Tikācārya), Vijayadhvajātīrtha, Viṣṇudāsācārya, Vyāsātīrtha, Vādirājātīrtha, Vijayīndra-tīrtha, Rāghavendra-svāmin, Yadupati-ācārya etc.

Ācārya did not earn any huge establishment or property for his maṭha. All the property that he left as legacy to his disciple-pontiffs was just a casket for keeping the Gods of daily worship, a staff and a piece of cloth tied on the shoulder like a bag to receive alms (Jolige). Later, the maṭhas took better shape as the number of their devout adherents became more and more.

Below is a broad sketch of the Mādhva-maṭhas now existing:

The number of maṭhas which came into being in Uḍupi itself, yoked to the responsibility of worshipping Kṛṣṇa is eight:

16. He is the son of Pejattāya Nārāyaṇa-paṇḍitācārya. Till recently his works were not discovered. The author of the present book edited and published his commentary on Ācārya's Aṇubhāṣya and the six commentaries on Upaniṣats.



1. (Palimāru-maṭha)<sup>17</sup>
2. (Adamāru-maṭha)
3. (Kṛṣṇāpura-maṭha)
4. (Puttige-maṭha)
5. (Sīrūru-maṭha)
6. (Sode-maṭha)
7. (Kāṇiyūru-maṭha)
8. (Pejāvara-maṭha)

It is a local custom to call the maṭhas after the names of the villages, wherein the gifted properties of the maṭhas were situated. Thus the maṭha which had its property in Palimāru is now called Palimāru-maṭha. The older name of the Sode-maṭha was Kumbhāsi-maṭha. Later on, in the time of Vādirāja, when the maṭha was established at Sode in North Canara, it became famous as Sode-maṭha.

The maṭhas in Karnāṭaka which were developed respectively by Śrī Padmanābha-tīrtha, Narahari-tīrtha, Mādhava-tīrtha and Akṣobhya-tīrtha are eight:

9. Uttarādi-maṭha
10. Sosale Vyāsarāja-maṭha
11. Kundāpura Vyāsarāja-maṭha
12. Rāghavendra-maṭha
13. Muḷabāgilu-maṭha
14. Majjigehaḷli-maṭha
15. Kūḍli-maṭha
16. Bāḷegāru (Baṇāgāra)-maṭha

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17. These maṭhas are grouped into four pairs. If the svāmiji on one maṭha expires without initiating his successor, it is the responsibility of the svāmiji of the other maṭha of the pair to initiate the successor.

For the first four maṭhas the founder-pontiffs are the first four mentioned above, viz. Padmanābha-tīrtha to Akṣobhya-tīrtha. A traditional branch of Vyāsarāja-maṭha itself came to be established at Kundāpura in the district of South Canara and came to be termed as Kundāpura-Vyāsarāja-maṭha.

Another branch of the maṭha founded by Padmanābha-tīrtha became Muḷabāgilu-maṭha. Śrīpādarāja (alias Śrīlakṣmīnārāyaṇa-tīrtha) who was one of the pioneers of the Dāsa-literature and the preceptor of Vyāsa-tīrtha was one of the illustrious pontiffs who illuminated the tradition of this maṭha.

Śrī Mādhava-tīrtha established another branch of a maṭha at Majjigehaḷli. In the same way, two branches of Akṣobhya-tīrtha grew into independent maṭhas at Kūḍli and Bāḷegāru.

Apart from these, there are four more maṭhas in Tulu region:

17. Subrahmanya-maṭha
18. Bhaṇḍārakeri-maṭha
19. Bhīmana-kaṭṭe-maṭha
20. Citrāpura-maṭha.

The Subrahmanya-maṭha has grown out of Viṣṇu-tīrtha's line itself. It is said that the line of disciples under the pontiff Acyuta-prajña, who in turn was the guru to initiate Ācārya into sannyāsa, branched into two lines - one at Bhaṇḍārakeri and other at Bhīmanakatte. Bhaṇḍārakeri located some 20 kms north of Uḍupi in Bārakūru. Though Bhīmanakatte (Bhīmaseturunivṇḍa) is also a maṭha of Tulu region, its original source head is a place called Bhīmanakatte on the Tirthahaḷli-Shimoga road. According to folk-tradition, the Citrāpura-maṭha is only a branch of the Pejāvara-maṭha. This maṭha is situated at Citrāpura, some 35kms from Uḍupi on the Uḍupi-Mangalore highway.

Two more maṭhas of Gauḍa-Sārasvata Brāhmaṇas that illuminated the Madhva school are quite famous:

21. Gokaṇṇa-Partagāli-Jīvottama-maṭha.
22. Kāśi-maṭha.

The original locale of Gokarṇa-maṭha is Gokarṇa. Later, pontiffs of this line started a maṭha in Partagāli Maḍagaon, Goa. After one of its celebrated pontiffs, Jivottama-tīrtha, the maṭha also came to be called Jivottama-maṭha. According to the traditional list of Pontiffs in this maṭha, its founder pontiff is reckoned as Śrī Nārāyaṇa-tīrtha who had his initiation into sannyāsa from Śrī Rāmacandra-tīrtha, the tenth pontiff of Palimāru-maṭha at Uḍupi.

Though there is a branch center of Kāśī-maṭha in Kāśī, it is originally a maṭha of the south only. Gauḍa-Sārasvata Brāhmins of the North coastal region stretching from Uḍupi up to Mumbai are disciples of Gokarṇa-maṭha. The Gauḍa-Sārasvatas from Uḍupi upto Kanyākumārī in the south are disciples of Kāśī-maṭha.

Besides these two more important Mādhva organizations in North India deserve mention here:

23. Mādhva-Gauḍīya maṭha of Bengal.

24. International Society for Kṛṣṇa Consciousness (ISKCON).

The Mādhva-Gauḍīya maṭha is a Mādhva religious centre in Bengal. One of its branches existed also in what is now Bānglādesh. A temple of Ācārya Madhva also existed there. The founder of the International Society of Kṛṣṇa Consciousness, A.C. (Abhayacaraṇa) Bhaktivedānta-Prabhupāda was one of the pontiffs in this Mādhva-Gauḍīya-maṭha. The ISKCON devotees regard only Ācārya Madhva as the first in their line of traditional pontiffs.

## Ācārya's Works

Ācārya has written four works on the Sūtrapraṣṭhāna (the Vedantic school of Brahma-sūtra);

1. Brahmasūtra-bhāṣya
2. Sarva-Sāstrārtha-Saṅgraha (Aṇu-bhāṣya)
3. Brahmasūtra-Anuvyākhyāna
4. Brahmasūtra-Anuvyākhyāna-vivaraṇa

Two works on the Gītā-praṣṭhāna (Vedantic school of Bhagavadgītā):

5. Bhagavadgītā-bhāṣya
6. Bhagavadgītā-tātparya-nirṇaya

In the Upaniṣat-praṣṭhāna (the vedantic school of the Upaniṣats), Ācārya has written bhāṣyās on all the major Upaniṣats. But there is a notable uniqueness in respect of these also. While all the other have commented only on three chapters of the Aitareya Upaniṣat, Ācārya's bhāṣya covers the entire Upaniṣatkāṇḍa (of 9 chapters) of the Aitareya Āraṇyaka.

7. Mahaitareyopaniṣad-bhāṣya
8. Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad-bhāṣya
9. Chāndogyopaniṣad-bhāṣya
10. Taittirīyopaniṣad-bhāṣya
11. Talavakāropaniṣad-bhāṣya (Kenopaniṣad-bhāṣya)
12. Kāṭhakopaniṣad-bhāṣya
13. Ātharvaṇopaniṣad-bhāṣya
14. Śatpraśnopaniṣad-bhāṣya
15. Yājñīya-mantropaniṣad-bhāṣya (Īśāvāsyopaniṣad-bhāṣya)
16. Māṇḍūkopaniṣad-bhāṣya

The verses occurring in the middle of the Māṇḍūkopaniṣat are mistakenly held to be Gauḍapāda's Kārikās. But Ācārya Rāmānuja has accepted that these form the original portions of the Upaniṣat itself. But Madhva has rejected the old wrong notion once for all by writing bhāṣya on these verses also. In this connection it is noteworthy how senior Advaitin scholars too like Brahmānanda accept that these are original Upaniṣadic verses<sup>18</sup>.

Ācārya not only blazed a new pathway of spiritual interpretation of the Veda by himself commenting on 40 Sūktas of Ṛg-veda but also showed the way leading to a synthesis of Saṁhitā, Brāhmaṇa and Āraṇyaka texts by commenting upon some chapters of the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa and the Mahānāmni-Khaṇḍa of the same Āraṇyaka. These works are:

17. Ṛg-bhāṣya

18. Khaṇḍārtha-nirṇaya (Karma-nirṇaya)

So also, there are three works of his which lay bare the heart of Mahābhārata and the Bhāgavata in a bid to synthesize the teachings of Itihāsas and Purāṇas:

19. Mahābhārata-tātparya-nirṇaya

20. Mahābhārata-tātparya

21. Bhāgavata-tātparya-nirṇaya

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18. Brahmānanda Sarasvatī in his commentary Gurucandrikā on Madhusūdana Sarasvatī's Advaita-siddhi makes a significant statement:

**‘māṇḍūkopaniṣtvyākhyārūpa-gauḍapādācārya-granthastha-prathama-prakaraṇokta-ślokebhyaḥ śrutitvena vaidika-prasiddhebhyaḥ’.**

[Oriental library publication, Mysore 1937, Vol.II, Page 291]. Also note a sentence of Advaita-siddhi in the page number 251 in the same volume:

**‘anādimāyā supto yadā jīvaḥ prabudhyate ityādiśrutiṣu’.**

From this, it is clear that even Madhusūdana Sarasvatī has accepted that the kārikās of Māṇḍūkopaniṣat, as part of Vedas.

Nine treatises are concerned with determining epistemology and ontology:

22. Viṣṇu-tatva-nirṇaya

23. Vāda (Tattvodyota)

24. Māyāvāda-Dūṣaṇa (Māyāvāda-Khaṇḍana)

25. Upādhi-Dūṣaṇa (Upādhi-Khaṇḍana or tatvaprakāśikā)

26. Mithyātvānumāna-Dūṣaṇa (Mithyātvānumāna-Khaṇḍana)

27. Tatva-Saṅkhyāna

28. Tatva-Viveka

29. Pramāṇa-Lakṣaṇa

30. Vāda-Lakṣaṇa (Kathā-Lakṣaṇa)

Seven works offer guidance regarding performance of ceremonials and rituals as laid down in law-books, regarding building architecture, mantra and tantra and duties and practices of house holders and mendicants:

31. Kṛṣṇāmṛta-Mahārṇava

32. Tantra-sāra-saṅgrahaḥ

33. Sadācāra-smṛti

34. Jayantī-Nirṇaya

35. Om-tat-sat-praṇava-kalpa

36. Nyāsa-Paddhati

37. Tithi-Nirṇaya

In the field of devotional literature, there are two works of his; one is a stotra or hymn of praise; the other is an anthology of compositions set to music and meant to be sung:

38. Narasimha-Nakṣastuti

39. Dvādaśa-Stotras

Further there is a work which Ācārya is said to have composed in his boyhood while playing with the ball, it is a small work in a unique meter:

40. Kanduka-Stuti.

Of these, 38 had been published formerly. But two, viz. Nyāsa-paddhati which explains the daily routine duties of mendicants and Tithi-nirṇaya, which is a unique Mathematical work indicating precise formulae for the determining the 'date n time', were which first noticed by me in the course of my research on palm-leaf manuscripts some years ago.

### The Essence of Madhva's Philosophy: Tatvavāda

Ācārya Madhva's line of thought gave a new turn to the tradition of Indian philosophy. This has been called by the name 'Tatvavāda'<sup>19</sup> in ancient works. In later times, when the unphilosophical trend emphasizing only conflict became prominent for recognizing Vedic schools of thought only in terms of Dvaita-Advaita etc., this came to be called the 'Dvaitamaṭha' or 'dualistic school'. But from the standpoint of True Vedic tradition, this is not a name which can be fully justified<sup>20</sup>.

In the philosophical system of Ācārya, tatvas or categories of reality are primarily two; svatantra-tatva and asvatantra-tatva (i.e.

19. Śrī Vādirāja in his Yukti-Mallikā refers to Ācārya's siddhānta as Tatva-Vāda. 'pare ca tatva-vādesmin garīyaśi bhāro mama'. It is worth mentioning here that the Bhāgavata commentators of Bengal, the followers of Caitanya refers to Madhvācārya as the preceptor of Tatva-Vāda.

20. The words Advaita and Dvaita in addition to indicating the meaning of Abheda and Bheda have the connotation of Yathārtha-Ĵnāna and Ayathārtha-Ĵnāna also. Hence the word dvaita may sometime create confusion.

Independent reality and dependent reality). God who creates the universe is the Independent reality; the entire universe created by him is the dependent reality.

Lord Nārāyaṇa alone is the Supreme Independent God-head. The entire Vedic hymns are only His praise by various epithets such as Agni, Indra and Varuṇa. Monotheism alone is thus the quintessence of Vedic literature and not polytheism.

All names (of God) are only epithets; God is the ocean of all qualities of excellences. Hence any name is good enough to invoke God. All names designate only God. Not only Vedic words, not only Sanskrit names, whatever the word may be, in any language whatever in the world, every name will designate Him alike. For, there is no sound or word in any language of the world which is essentially not a name of God.

Though God is one, divinities are many. These divinities are not God: they are just souls that have realized God and have risen to a higher state by acquiring siddhi or divine power. These siddhas or realized adepts can serve as gurus to guide the jīva or soul which is still a sādḥaka or spiritual aspirant.

If God is 'bimba' or the original substrate, jīvas or souls are His 'pratibimbās' or images. The image is always dependent on the original substrate; it can never become identical with it. One original substrate can have many images. Although the souls are many, each one has its own distinct individuality, different from others. As many souls, so many varieties! Along with all these differential gradations, these souls are all entwined in the single thread of similarity to God in their knowledge-aspect.

Just as souls, the inanimate substances too that go into the creative apparatus of the universe are innumerable. Thus the soul (jīva), who is at the centre in the triple categories of God-soul

inanimate world, becomes involved in the meshes of samsāra or bondage, if he leans towards one side; and if he leans towards another, he becomes liberated.

There is one important point to be noted here. Mukti or liberation does not mean any cessation of the World itself. It is not any disappearance of a world falsely held as real. Liberation means release from the bondage of the world. The world does exist even after release; but there is no bondage. Earlier, the soul being unaware of its power of self-consciousness, was ignorant of the original substrate, (viz. God); and had become a tool in the hands of the material nature, searching in vain for the origin. But now (in liberated state) he has conquered the inconsistent Nature; for he has now become conscious of God, who is his original and also the first cause of the entire universe.

The inconsistent world is five-faceted; five elements, five elemental essences, five sheaths, five sense-organs etc. That is why it is designated as “pra-pancha” or a ‘perfect pentad’. In this pentad intermixed in a five-fold manner. The reality of Prāṇa or life is also a five-fold entity of prāṇa, apāna, vyāna, udāna and samāna. Moreover, it is being controlled all the time by God who has also assumed a five-fold form, viz. Aniruddha, Pradyumna, Saṅkarṣaṇa, Vāsudeva and Nārāyaṇa.

Thus, one might distinguish a five-fold difference too in this world; difference between one inanimate entity (jaḍa) and another inanimate entity; difference between jaḍa and the soul; difference between jaḍa and the God; difference between one soul and the other; difference between soul and God. These differences are neither temporary nor merely practical; it is an invariable and natural property of everything. For such is the law of nature: One is not two; two is not one.

Ācārya effected a synthesis and integration between several self-contradictory notions which had accumulated by his time regarding God, devotion and the universe. We might refer here to some of the important ones among them:

God is both endowed with forms and formless; both qualified and unqualified. He is endowed with forms because He has a body of knowledge and Bliss. He is formless because he has no body within the reach of our finite thought. He is qualified because he possesses in perfection all good or auspicious attributes. He is unqualified also because he is devoid of all material adjuncts. When viewed from the right standpoint, it will be realized that all modes of utterance express varied aspects of the only truth. The Vedic literature will not reveal its secrets to one who is not having this synthetic vision.

The world is not a magic show improvised by any magician. It is ultimately true. From another standpoint, it is untrue also. But then the word ‘untrue’ does not mean ‘false’; it means ‘dependent reality’. Its truth is restrained by God; hence it is untrue.

Similarly, there is no truth in the objection that the Vedic religion is tainted with idolatry or image-worship. For, it does not worship icons; it worships only God symbolized by the icons. Does the all-pervasive God not exist in the icon?

Among other significant contributions of Ācārya’s Tatvavāda, Vyakti-viśiṣṭavāda or unique individuality of every soul and svabhāva-vāda or theory of unalterable nature of the souls deserve notice. The following is a summary statement of it:

There is no object like another. There is no person or jīva like another. No man’s nature is like that of another. Underlying everything and every individual person, there is a unique

individuality. The all-round and complete development of this special personality is indeed the goal of human life. Human life of bondage (samsāra) is nothing but a practical workshop which helps the individual soul attain the perfect development of his personality in dependence upon God. Mukti or release is only a state of perfection of enjoying the bliss of one's own personality.

Each one's attainment is commensurate with one's effort. Our development is in keeping with our personality. The sea is full; the tank is full; even water-pots may be full of (of water). But that fullness is not identical in all these. The volume varies according to the variation in size. Everything is full; yet its fullness is variegated.

There are no two things in this creation which are identical. Even two leaves of the same tree are not exactly identical. Hence the idea that all becomes one or all become identical ultimately, is only a sugar-coated sop. It is an idea opposed to scriptures. It is an idea going against the very law of Nature.

The development of an individual takes place strictly in accordance with his inner nature. The environment factors only help manifest what is already rooted in one's inner nature. Thus inner nature is the spontaneous way of life for a Jīva. It is an innate characteristic rooted firmly in the jīva from time immemorial. No amount of effort can alter its course. A sātvika or pure-hearted man cannot become a tāmasa or evil-minded one. Nor can a tāmasa turn into a sātvika. One's attainment of perfection is nothing but a complete manifestation of one's unique individual nature.

The idea of cāturvarṇya or "four colors" in the Gītā vindicates this view only. The Gītā idea of "four colors" is quite distinct from the idea of "four castes" prevalent today. It is an idea which

relates only to the soul's constitutional nature or personality-trait. The true color of the soul needs to be discovered. That indeed is a right social order. In such a social order, the son of a low-born (śūdra) may be a nobleman (Brāhmaṇa); On the contrary, even a brāhmaṇa's son may be a sūdra. For, varṇa 'color' is not something which is transmitted hereditarily; it is something quite personal; something which is determined by the individual's own personality traits.

Only one who knows God can know the secret of the universe. It is impossible to know the universe completely by scientific research into matter. Hence one should know God Himself. It is only by knowing the root that one can tackle a tree. This indeed is the pathway of knowledge (Jñānayoga). The reality which unites the soul to god like a thread is called Prāṇa-tatva or the "Impelling force". It is the one reality which embodies all souls and is also termed "jīvottama-tatva" or the "reality of perfect jīva-hood". Ācārya says about himself that it is an aspect of this supreme reality which incarnated itself in human form as Madhva in order to lay bare the Supreme Truth.

The pathway of Jñāna-yoga or knowledge supreme is not opposed to Karma or action. The very dichotomy that the pathway of action is for the ignorant, while that of knowledge is for the adept, is absurd. Knowledge without action is an impractical intellectual exercise. Action without knowledge is but blind orthodoxy. Knowledge is necessary; knowledgeable action too is necessary. At the same time, an understanding of God's infinite glory is equally necessary. Having understood God's greatness, it is necessary to love him devotedly. The world also deserves to be lived, since the wonderful universe is just His creation in sport (līla). Denying the world is as good as denying God's infinite greatness. We should all dedicate ourselves to our

duty in the following spirit: “We are all subjects in the kingdom of God; rendering assistance to those who are in distress is the tax we owe to God Himself, our king”. Such an integral synthesis of the pathways of knowledge, action and Devotion becomes a perfect pathway for one’s life.

The physical eye is not enough for the development of knowledge. The inner eye has to be opened; one has to turn inward. There are only two ways in which that goal can be realized; one is direct personal experience; and the other is the word of wisdom bequeathed to us by sages who were “seers” of the Veda. Their word is a torch to illumine our way. In the light of that torch and along that way alone we should walk on and discover Truth. Thus when both the word of scripture and our own immediate experience coincide, it becomes the highest criterion confirming our conviction. In order to achieve it, a continuous process of hearing, contemplating and meditation are prescribed.

Not even spiritual statement is to be accepted if it is against one’s own conscience. An awakened conscience can discover the integral unity underlying all Vedic statements. It is in order to demonstrate this synthetic essence of the Vedas that the Brahmasutras, Bhārata, Pancarātra and Purāṇas have been composed. Those alone are primary authorities. Texts of smṛti (moral code) authored by sages like Manu are acceptable as authority only when they are in conformity with the essential message of the Veda. They are not at all ultimate authorities.

Another means of valid knowledge besides perception and scripture is inference or reasoning. Although it is an instrument of valid knowledge’ it is not an independent instrument. Hence it is spoken of only as “anu-māna” (anusāri pramāṇa) or ancilliary instrument to the other two: viz. the perception and the scriptures.

It is important to note that in supra-sensory matters, nothing can be established by inference or reasoning independently. For, anything one desires can be established by reasoning. Those who do not possess this awareness can establish nothing by the strength of their reasoning.

Therefore in regard to supra-sensory facts and especially, in regard to God, there is no use in one’s surrendering oneself to reasoning. One should surrender oneself only to God. One should surrender oneself to the voice of experienced sages and wise men who have realized God; that is to say, to the Vedic words. One should know through word of sages and having known, one should experience it; having experienced, one should see; having seen, one should succeed; having succeeded; one should gain.

And for that one should surrender oneself to God; one should know through surrender; and knowing, one should again surrender. This awareness is the key to bliss. This is broadly the sum and substance of Ācārya’s spiritual viewpoint.

Ācārya has discovered several unique facts about the physical world, the order of creation and the basic realities that govern creation. Some of them may be mentioned here:

1. The Material ethereal sky which is one of the five elements filling this universe is that which suffers destruction along with the universe. It is permeated by a dark blue color, beyond the reach of the bare eye. But there is another sky which fully pervades the universe and is eternal. It is called ‘avyākṛtākāśa’ or ‘undifferential space’.
2. The atoms which are the micro-elements of the physical material are not at all ultimate and indivisible entities. In every atom there are innumerable subtle particles.

3. There is life movement in plants, herbs and creepers too. That vegetation-life too can respond to the actions of man. There are plants which thrill to the melody of music and yield sprouts, flowers and fruits.

4. No matter is completely destroyed. Destruction is another name for only a change in form. We say that the body is destroyed. But really speaking, the body is not destroyed; it has become ashes; that is all. Thus existence and non-existence are two sides of the same coin.

5. From the microcosm to the macrocosm, the entire universe is completely interfused. To understand any one thing completely, a complete knowledge of the entire universe becomes necessary. By knowing one, all can be known. One, who does not know all, does not know even one.

6. Enclosed within the fifteen fences of name, possession, thought, speech, action, strength, food, mind, senses, earth, water, fire, air, sky and faith, the sixteenth jīva-kalā or the soul lies hidden. When these fifteen inanimate fences are broken, the soul gets self-awareness. This is called Self-realization. To one who has attained self-realization, the way beyond to god-realization becomes easy. First, the realization of the 'I' principle. Then, the realization of the 'He' principle. This is the secret of the realization of 'Sóham' (I-He), the Ultimate Truth. One who is unaware of his own self, or one who mistakes such awareness of self as ultimate realization, can never progress in the path of God-realization.

On the whole, Ācārya Madhva's life-message is this:

**kuru bhuñkṣva ca karma nijam niyatam  
hari-pāda-vinamra-dhiyā satatam |**

**harireva paro harireva guruḥ  
harireva jagat-pitr-mātr-gatiḥ || [Dvādaśa-stotra]**

(Do thy duty allotted by God

And eat what comes to thy share

Hari is the Supreme, Hari is the Teacher great,

Father and Mother too is Hari.)

**tadalam bahu-loka-vicintanayā  
pravaṇam-kuru-mānasamiśa-pade |**

(Stop then thy worldly cares endless

Pin thy mind at the Lord's feet boundless!).

## Brief Introduction to Ācārya's Works

It has been generally said that Ācārya Madhva had authored 37 works. It has also been believed if one took it into account the prayer 'Kandukastuti' said to have been composed when Ācārya was a small boy and was playing with a ball. The total number of works authored by him would come to 38. But in the course of my rummaging of palm-leaf manuscripts for more than ten years I happened to come across two more works which had not been known so far. Though these additional works are small in size they are of great historical significance. One of them is 'Nyāsapaddhati', a treatise prescribing the duties of a Yati or Sanyāsin and elucidating their duties of everyday life. The other one is 'Tithi-nirṇaya', a matchless treatise of astrological computations, which helps in determining the 'tithis' like Ekādaśī. It is a matter of historical wonder how these works, in spite of their great significance, remained obscure and did not see the light of the day. Perhaps our Vedāntin or spiritualists



considered astrology as a defiled subject beyond their level of understanding and ‘Tithinirṇaya’ remained unknown. ‘Nyāsapaddhati’ deals with kind of spiritual life totally at variance with the life of Rājasa opulence practiced by today’s Yatis owning rich maṭhas and perhaps naturally it failed to become popular and therefore got relegated to the darkness of the sanctum sanctorum of the monasteries.

In sum, the range of his works and the variety of the subjects he treated, have no match in the whole history of Indian philosophical inquiry. Such a comprehensive treatment of subject in such little works has no precedent even in other Ācāryas of the triumvirate. There is no subject of Adhyātma or spiritualism left untouched by Madhvācārya. While the other Ācāryas limited their writings mainly to the essence of Vedānta or Vedic knowledge. Madhvācārya synthesized all the facets of Indian traditional knowledge with Vedānta. Madhvācārya was the first to show that all paths of knowledge ultimately meet in ocean of philosophy as all the waters finally join the sea. Unfortunately perhaps he is the last one too. Unfortunately, no other Ācārya of the succeeding ages has ever shown the same degree of wisdom and awareness to develop and maintain this kind of rare attitude towards synthesis. Probably nobody else was able to reach the intellectual height of Madhvācārya. They remained dwarfs and tried to measure the heights of the mighty philosopher. Consequently they measured their own heights but failed to assess the height of the great Ācārya. There were many who criticized Madhvācārya without understanding him. Few really understood him. Perhaps this is the fate of all people of colossal genius. Without even having a glance at the original works critics take the liberty of subjecting them to indiscriminate criticism. The harm done by the irresponsibility of such ‘wise men’ is

indeed enormous. The treasure of knowledge which has been carefully accumulated with great difficulty gets ruined (goes with the wind) because of such lightmindedness. The root of this tragedy is that even a dunce believes that his understanding is the end of all knowledge and his decision is final on issues of the world. ‘**sarvopi manyate loka ātmānam buddhimattaram**’.

Let us now see the variety of themes handled in the works of Madhvācārya. The Mahābhārata and the Rāmāyaṇa are known as historical works on India. Madhvācārya has written an exhaustive commentary especially on the Mahābhārata by name Mahābhārata-tātparya-nirṇaya (Arriving at the conclusive meaning of the Mahābhārata). A small twin volume Mahābhārata-tātparya-nirṇaya convincingly argues that Kṛṣṇa is the hero of the Mahābhārata. Both these works are meant for a comprehensive study of Itihāsa (history). It should be noted that Madhvācārya was a pioneer among those who wrote with the purpose of researching the works of Itihāsa or history.

Then there are two more works on the Bhagavadgītā one of three Prasthānas, the essence of the Itihāsa of the Mahābhārata, Gītābhāṣya and Gītā-tātparya.

Then there is the Bhāgavatātātparya-nirṇaya, a commentary on the great epic Bhāgavata, which provides a context to elucidate the whole range of holistic Purāṇas. The other Indian pontiffs built their Vedāntic edifice, almost ignoring the epics or Purāṇas. Madhvācārya was a pioneer in attempting a synthesis of the Purāṇas with the Vedic lore. He thus paved the way for an integrated approach to all the spiritual texts. He is also unique in being the only pontiff to expound commentaries on the Purāṇas.

Even in the matter of writing commentaries on the Vedas Madhvācārya was the first among the great Ācāryas. By offering

a spiritual interpretation of the first forty Sūktas of the Ṛg-veda. He thus unveiled a completely different perspective of looking at the whole Vedic literature. All the Sanskrit commentators on the Vedas have tried to explain only their ritualistic aspect, but Madhvācārya was the first commentator to bring to light the spiritual meaning of the Vedas. Thus he enhanced their significance. It was historically unfortunate that even Sāyaṇa, who later wrote the commentary on the Vedas failed to see their spiritual meaning. In fact the real task of discovering the meaning of all the Vedas is yet to be fully carried out. Though it is said that Rāghavendra Svāmin has done so, no works are available. It is indeed not a matter of small achievement, that the spiritual interpretations as expounded by some of the modern thinkers like Mahārṣi Aurbindo and Dayānanda Sarasvatī was envisaged 7 centuries ago by Madhvācārya.

In fact, if Dayānanda Sarasvatī had seen Madhvācārya's commentary on the Ṛg-veda, his perspective would have totally changed. The lack of this acquaintance is clearly seen in the works of Dayānanda Sarasvatī.

There is evidence to show that Mahārṣi Aravind and his disciples were influenced by Madhvācārya's commentary. The outburst of Kapāli Sāstri, who discovered the rare meaning of the Ṛg-veda in the light of Mahārṣi Aravind's interpretation of it, is a reliable evidence of this influence. He is said to have exclaimed, '**vedānām adhyātmaparatā nāstīti ko nāma brūte madhvabhāṣyeṣu jāgratsu**'. (Who can dare say that Vedas have no spiritual meaning, as long as Madhvācārya's commentary exists).

The parts of the Vedas, next to Samhitas are Brāhmaṇas and Āraṇyakas. Madhvācārya did not ignore them either. To arrive at the exact interpretation of a special khaṇḍa (section) of Aitareya-Āraṇyaka, the most important and the best known of all the

Āraṇyaka, he wrote a book titled Khaṇḍārthanirṇaya, which is now known as Karmanirṇaya. The spiritual aspect of all the Brāhmaṇas and Āraṇyakas, which were supposed to be Karma (ritual)-oriented, was brought to light by Madhvācārya. This therefore is another unique work of Ācārya. There is no record of any other Ācārya or proponent of a religion who bothered about the Brāhmaṇas and Āraṇyakas. All others had focused their concerted attention to present their philosophical concepts on the basis of the Upaniṣats only. Madhvācārya paid attention also to the Samhitas and Āraṇyakas and achieved a synthesis of these sections.

A cluster of ten Upaniṣats known as Daśopaniṣats are the second among the three Prasthānas. They are the essence of the Vedic literature, the essence of the Āraṇyakas. Like Saṅkarācārya, Madhvācārya too wrote quite extensive commentaries on this cluster of ten Upaniṣats. Even here, while most commentators elucidated only a few sections of the Aitareya, Madhvācārya commented on the whole of the Aitareyopaniṣat.

The last of the three Prasthānas are the Brahmasūtras. They are true philosophical concepts formulated by Bādarāyaṇa for the interpretation of the Vedas. Madhvācārya authored four commentaries on them. One is the Brahmasūtrasbhāṣya. Anubhāṣya, written in metrical form is another work, which elucidates the logical aspects and the line of arguments used in the Brahmasūtras. Nyāyavivaraṇa describes the structures of the Adhikaraṇas. The fourth one is Sarvaśāstrārthasaṅgraha, a little book which gives the essence of the Adhikaraṇas. This is also known as Aṇubhāṣya. Thus Madhvācārya has written 21 books on the Vedas, Itihāsa-Purāṇas and the three Prasthānas.

Among the other works of Ācārya are nine prakaraṇas, which elucidate the various aspects and concepts of philosophy. They

are: 1) Viṣṇutatvanirṇaya, 2) Vāda (Tattvodyota), 3-5) Dūṣṇatraya (Khaṇḍanatraya), 6) Tatvasaṁkhyāna, 7) Tatvaviveka, 8) Pramāṇalakṣaṇa and 9) Vādalakṣaṇa (Kathālakṣaṇa).

In these works Ācārya has discussed the details of epistemology and ontology, the various aspects of Veda, the drawbacks of the other systems of philosophy by giving scriptural evidence to support his arguments. Thus there are altogether 30 works summarizing the theoretical basis of the whole range of the Vedas.

His next work is Tantrasārasaṅgrahaḥ, a significant work dealing with Āgama-Sāstra. It gives technical details of the art of architecture and also Vāstuśilpa. This is a rare work in the whole of Sanskrit literature.

While Tantrasārasaṅgraha delineates the whole gamut of ācāra, Sadācārasmṛti codifies daily spiritual practices. Two books are devoted to the codification of the right conduct of Yatis or Sanyāsins: Om tatsatpraṇavakalpa (Yatipraṇavakalpa), and Nyāsapaddhati. Tithinirṇaya describes the method of determining ekādaśī or the fortnightly day of fasting (11<sup>th</sup> day of the fortnight). Jayantīnirṇaya describes the method of determining Kṛṣṇajayantī or Lord Kṛṣṇa's day of birth. Thus the number books relating to the code of conduct is 6 (Total: 30 + 6 = 36).

Kṛṣṇāmṛtamahārṇava is another rare work. It elucidates the glories of Lord Kṛṣṇa and the importance of observances like Ekādaśī, gathering evidence from various sources like the Purāṇas. This is therefore a compendium of the wise statements from all Purāṇas.

Two more are incantations. One is the Nakhastuti. Another is a collection of twelve incantations: Dvādaśastotras. These twelve

incantations need not be considered as a single work. Each one of them is an independent composition. Thus the total number of works written by Ācārya goes up to 50.

The last of his works that could be mentioned is, the Kandukastuti or Śrī Kṛṣṇastuti, known as a composition of his childhood. Thus the number of the available texts written by Madhvācārya who has dealt with all the aspects of spiritual literature comes to 51. It cannot be said that, these are the only works of Madhvācārya. Many works not committed to writing might have been lost or by being damaged by white ants or by reasons unknown. This guess has been corroborated by the words of Nārāyaṇapaṇḍitācārya who documented the biography of Madhvācārya. In his work Prameyanavamālika he calls Ācārya the author of hundreds of works. 'Hundreds of works' strongly indicates the possibility that Ācārya wrote many more works which have not been accessible. Another statement in Śrīmadhvavijaya also goes to support this:

**nānā-subhāṣita-stotragāthādi kṛti satkṛtīḥ |  
tvayi ratnākare ratnaśreṇīrvā gaṇayanti ke ||**

Each statement of Ācārya is as rich in meaning as a whole book. But his words have not been recorded or documented. Śrī Nārāyaṇapaṇḍita asks if anybody in the world has counted the pearls inside the ocean or the works written by Madhvācārya. Even if we make allowance for exaggeration in the statement it however does suggest that Ācārya authored hundreds of works. Though many works were composed, many more were not committed to writing and hence have escaped enumeration.

This can be explained as follows. Ācārya never sat down to write anything. He would only dictate and his disciples would note down. This was his practice. He never personally inscribed. It is therefore quite possible that many times when he uttered

significant statements at the moment's inspiration there were none to take them down and the utterances remained. Still the fifty one books that are now available are not a small treasure. A true inquirer can spend his whole life in ingesting this whole lot of wisdom and digesting it. It is urgent that the little that has remained is carefully preserved and prescribed for serious study so that it may be used by posterity. From this point of view an attempt is made here to briefly introduce each book authored by Madhvācārya.

### 1. Mahābhārata-tātparya-nirṇaya

As its very name suggests this is a research work written with the objective of explaining the Mahābhārata and interpreting its essence. Ācārya himself has revealed his objective of writing this book.

samasta śāstrārtha nirṇayōyam  
viśeṣato bhārata vartmacārī |  
vinirṇayo nāstyamunā vinā yad  
viprasthitānāmiva sarva-vācām || [32-160]

“Though the book broadly traces the course of the story of the Mahābhārata its true objective is to get at the conclusive meaning of all other philosophical treatises. There is no other book which can serve the purpose of reconciling the mutually contradictory statements of different scriptures to arrive at a conclusive interpretation”.

Ācārya himself mentions the research he has done in this regard:

kvacid granthān prakṣipanti kvacidantaritānapi |  
kuryuḥ kvacicca vyatyāsam pramādāt kvacidanyathā ||  
śāstrāntarāṇi sājānan vedāmcāsyā prasādataḥ |  
deśe-deśe tathā granthān dṛṣṭvā caiva pṛthagvidhān ||

yathā sa bhagavān vyāsaḥ sāṅgānnārāyaṇaḥ prabhuḥ |  
jagāda bhāratādyeṣu tathā vakṣye tadīkṣayā ||

“In some places texts have been added. Sometimes existing texts have been removed. In some places the order of texts has been arbitrary. Sometimes ignorance has led to variations of text versions. When thus philosophical treatises were haphazard in form, I took up the task of writing this book to arrive at the genuine text version. By the grace of God I am familiar with all Sāstras as well as all the Vedas. I have come to know that the original version has undergone various kinds of distortion. I have discovered by my studies the authentic text version. What God, in the form of Vyāsa, wrote in the Mahābhārata and how he wrote it, I have tried to explain here in tune with the intention of the original writers.”

These words themselves reveal the significance of the work. Comparative study of different works, deciding on the original after analyzing hundreds of sources and then arriving at the proper meaning of original authentic text- these are the exercises that have come to light after modern techniques of research have come into vogue. It is certainly a matter of great historical importance that even seven centuries ago Madhvācārya presented to the world such a research-oriented work. Suktāṅkara has recognized this and has quoted from this work of Ācārya in his study of the Mahābhārata. But how many are aware of this matter of fact?

Nārāyaṇapaṇḍitā, who has written the biography of Madhvācārya says the following words about the mkagnum opus of Ācārya:

itihāsa-purāṇābdher-bhavaccittādri-loḷitāt |  
jātām bhārata-tatparya-sudhām kaḥ san na sevate ||  
[Madhvavijaya: 15-76]

“Mahābhārata-tatparya-nirṇaya is the ambrosia that issued when Madhvācārya churned the ocean of Itihāsas and Purāṇas with the help of his mind as the Mandāra mountain, the churning rod of the epic. Which seeker of knowledge would resist the temptation to enjoy its taste?”

Those who have made a deep study of this work will understand that there is no exaggeration in these words. This is Madhvācārya’s greatest work, his Magnum Opus. This was his favorite and the one gave him supreme satisfaction.

In the first three chapters of this work Madhvācārya has given the essence of all Itihāsas, Purāṇas and all Sāstras. The next six sections, chapters from 4 to 9 contain the story of the Rāmāyaṇa in the version decided by him as authentic. Different versions of the Rāmāyaṇa narrate the story in different ways. This is a confounding maze for a true seeker of the authentic text. Ācārya has authoritatively fixed the authentic text and given it here. The tenth chapter tells the story of the birth of Vyāsa. The story of the ten incarnations of Lord Viṣṇu has been summarized in different sections of this work. In the next section of the book the stories of Bhāgavata, Harivaṁśa and of the Pāṇḍavas of Mahābhārata have been arranged in a proper sequence and narrated in the next section of this work. The conflicts in the stories of the Mahābhārata and the Bhāgavata have been resolved. They have been retold in an exactly chronological sequence. Many obscure points of the Mahābhārata have been clarified. When there are two or three different versions of the Mahābhārata itself, the authentic text has been fixed. The events of the story have been placed in the proper perspective. For instance in a well-known text Abhimanyu is said to have been in a maze called Cakravyūha. In some other versions of the text it is mentioned as Padmavyūha. Ācārya upheld the version of Padmavyūha. This

work is full of details which clarify many obscure points regarding Mahābhārata. If a scholar is not familiar with this work, he will not get such authentic and rare details as here, no matter how many other works he may have read. This is a mine of information for a true researcher. From the point of language, many of the usages occur for the first time and are therefore unique. There is an underlying poetic rhythm in the expressions. Many usages here transgress the formal rules of grammar laid down by Pāṇini and give a flavor of the old Vedic style and of modernity too. This great work has no comparison not only in the Purāṇic literature but in the whole body of Sanskrit literature.

## 2. Mahābhārata-tātparya

This is a short epic consisting of eighty stanzas with double rhymes in each couplet and tells the story of Śrīkṛṣṇa in brief. The essence of the poem is the life of the Pāṇḍavas as shaped under the leadership or steering of Lord Śrīkṛṣṇa. That is why it is called Mahābhārata-tātparya, though it is the story of Śrīkṛṣṇa. Having yamaka prāsa or double rhyme it is also called yamakabhārata. An example of the poetic rhyme can be found in the following verse:

**tatra yaśodā tanayam mene kṛṣṇam svakiyam-avadātanayam | (6)  
tanmātā kopamitā tamanu-sasārātma-vādavākopamitā || (14)**

Nārāyaṇapaṇḍitācārya thus describes this work:

**bhagavānścittrakavitām laukikīm darśayan kila |  
gopyam bhārata-saṅkṣepamakṛthā viśva-vismayam ||**

[Ma. Vi. : 15-83]

“Madhvācārya encapsulated in this work the secret of the Mahābhārata using auditory figures of speech which generally appeal to the ordinary people of the world. Even the great scholars were wonderstruck by this work.

Why did Madhvācārya write such juggling verses, which serve only as a means of amusement and have no great poetic or philosophical significance. There is a legend in its background. Once in an assembly of scholars Ācārya is said to have put forth his arguments. Unable to counter them on the philosophical plane some perverts seem to have said:” Yours is any way only dry philosophy. You are incapable of composing poetry of highly dexterous skill. Ācārya took up the challenge and is said to have composed these couplets on the spot. The pervert scholars having taken aback by the all-round skill of Ācārya, bowed before him, admitting their folly. Anyway the challenge thrown by some people of perversity led to the composition of this rare feat of poetry. The challengers perhaps deserve our gratitude!

### 3. Gītābhāṣyam

It is said that chronologically Gītābhāṣyam is the first work of Madhvācārya. He is said to have written it before he went to Badari for the first time, took it there and presented it to Vedavyāsa. In spite of its small size it succeeds in highlighting the essence of the Gītā in such a manner as had not been done by any previous commentaries on the book. In commenting upon the Gītā, commentators have often taken excessive liberty and extended their interpretations beyond all limits. But Madhvācārya, for the first time based his interpretation entirely on evidences from ancient works. The Gītā was indeed the original source of inspiration for Ācārya. According to him the Mahābhārata and the Bhāgavata are the essence of Indian philosophy. And the Gītā being its quintessence.

**mahābhārata-pārijāta-madhubhūtām gītām upanibandha |**  
**[Gītābhāṣyam]**

“Mahābhārata is the Pārijāta flower that has blossomed in the plant of Vedic literature.” The Bhagavadgītā is the nectar of this Pārijāta blossom. This was perhaps the reason that he took up the task of writing a commentary on the Gītā. This work, like the other works of Ācārya, is a dwarf in size (Vāmana) but a Colossus (Trivikrama) in significance.

### 4. Gītā-tātparya-nirṇaya

Not being satisfied with the one commentary he wrote on the Gītā, he wrote a second commentary. The second commentary is known as the Gītā-tātparya-nirṇaya. Ācārya has captured the sum total of the message of the Bhagavadgītā in a few words as follows:

**‘svavihita-vṛttyā bhaktyā bhagavadārādhanameva  
paramadharmaḥ’.**

‘Dharma or the lawful way of life is to follow the kind of occupation which naturally suits one’s leanings and to live a life with a spirit of surrender to God and devotion. All ways of life opposed to this and guided by selfishness are forms of Adharma or unlawful life.’ This is the essence of Dharma or Adharma, and this is the essence of Kṛṣṇa’s message the Bhagavadgītā.

In this commentary Ācārya has given a few new insights which he had not mentioned in Gītābhāṣya. This is rather a marshalling of various evidences for the correct interpretation of the Gītā rather than a presentation of his own elucidation. This work plays a unique role in supporting the message of the Gītā on the basis of hundreds of ancient works.

About these two works of interpretation of the Gītā Śrīmadhvavijaya says the following:

**gītātātparya-bhāṣyābhyām-ābhyām viṣvaṁ prakāśyate |  
gogaṇair-apratikārair-arkendubhyām-ivādhikam || [15-75]**

‘The words of the Gītātātparya and the Bhāṣya, like the rays of the sun and the moon, illuminate the whole world.’

### 5. Bhāgavata-tātparya-nirṇaya

This is Ācārya’s commentary on the Bhāgavata, the most famous of all the Purāṇas. This is a unique work which follows the ancient technique of interpreting all Purāṇas, in the pretext of interpreting one Purāṇa, i.e. the Bhāgavatam, in this case. There are three varieties of language used in the Purāṇas: Guhyabhāṣe or code language; Darśanabhāṣe or visible language; and Samādhibhāṣe or dormant language. By reading the Purāṇas without knowing this distinction there is the risk of misinterpretation. Madhvācārya is the first one to alert readers about correctly interpreting the Purāṇas. The Bhāgavatātātparya-nirṇaya is the sole work which shows the true way of correctly understanding the heart of the Purāṇas. There has been no precedent nor a successor to the novel methods found in this work to correctly interpret the purāṇas.

Madhvavijaya extols this work in the following words:

**purāṇasthāna-pāṇthānāmbhāṣātraya-vedinām |  
bhavatā susakhā cakre sribhāgavata-nirṇayaḥ || [15-66]**

‘For those who wish to traverse along the path of the purāṇas, but do not know the intricacies of the language techniques used, this Bhāgavata-tātparya-nirṇaya is a perfect guide and companion.’

There have been more than ten commentaries on the Bhāgavata. Amongst them, the Bhāgavata-tātparya-nirṇaya is unparalleled. Besides being the oldest available commentary on the Bhāgavata, this work is based on a very ancient version of the text, which

greatly differs from the version which is generally vogue. This deserves a special information among collecting commentaries in view of the different (Prameyas) vocabulary. With the help of many scriptural statements as evidence, Ācārya has elucidated many epistemological (śāstreya) and philosophical aspects, which do not occur anywhere else in Sanskrit literature. Ancient dictionaries have been used to discover the meanings of many of the usages which were forgotten in the due course of time. Let us take one instance. In one context in the Bhāgavata, Kṛṣṇa is described as Badara-pāṇḍu-vadana. Badara is now understood to mean a top. Almost all commentators have taken it to mean top and have explained the phrase as one who has a fair face like a top. Ācārya reminds us of the ancient meaning of the word badara:

**mānavo badaraḥ sindhuḥ śaśinastu trināmakam |**

An ancient dictionary explains that the moon has three different unique names: mānava, badara and sindhu. According to this Badara-pāṇḍu-vadana means one who has a beautiful face like the moon. To enjoy the real richness of the meaning of the Bhāgavata one has to submit oneself to this commentary written by Ācārya. Though it is a brief commentary its importance is immeasurable.

### 6. Ṛg-bhāṣyam

In this work Ācārya has interpreted the first forty Sūktas of the Ṛg-veda. He has shown, quite elaborately, elucidating the whole Vedic Sūktas from a spiritual perspective. This is in the manner of a sailor’s compass. He intends us to interpret the whole Veda in the same way.

There is no colophon at the end of the book. This leads us to question: Has Ācārya written commentaries also on the

remaining Sūktas as they are not available to us or did he leave it unfinished as it stands now.

Ācārya has not forgotten to end even his very small works with a colophon. How is it that the colophon is missing in this very significant work? Therefore the possibility that he has commented also on the next mantras of the Ṛg-veda cannot be altogether dismissed. As only this much of the work has been existing since the days of Śrī Jayatīrtha, there is not much of hope about discovering the remaining parts. Though Ācārya might have written them, they should now be taken as irretrievably lost.

The little that remains of this commentary, however, is of no mean significance. It is the first ever commentary on the Veda written by a religious prophet. This is also the very first commentary on the Veda which gives it a spiritual meaning. Written in a poetic form in consonance with the Vedic metrical form it abounds in phraseology and idioms of ancient Sanskrit and follows the ancient rhythmic pattern. For the students of the Veda the commentary reveals an entirely new world. As an example let us see the following statement:

**bhaktyādalaṅkṛtāḥ somā manāmsyanye hiraṇyataḥ |  
hiraṇyālaṅkṛtā yasmāt hūyante vāyave sutaḥ ||**

Somayāga is a ritual in which a herbal potion called Somarasa is offered to the sacrificial fire. Spiritually this has a totally different meaning. The Somarasa is nothing but the mind which melts in devotion to God. For God responding to the call of the devotee is itself the enjoyment of drinking the Somarasa. The invitation given to God to manifest in the heart is itself the holding of the sacrificial fire. The yāga or the yajña is nothing but the life governed by the divine spirit.

Let the priests who have vowed to perform Somayāga everyday do so or not, sacrifice of the kind described above should take place in the heart of everyone, this is the message of the Vedas, says Ācārya. Students of the Vedas should ever be grateful to him for this unique work.

## 7. Khaṇḍārtha-nirṇaya

This is well-known by its other name 'Karmanirṇaya'. Madhvācārya wrote this work when he was in Ujire. There is a legend behind the writing of this work:

Ācārya had stayed in the Janārdana temple of Ujire. A debate was going on the interpretation of the Vedas. Ācārya's point of view in favor of applying a spiritual meaning to all the Vedas was unpalatable to the yājñikas who as ritualists were in favor of performing Karma or ritual. They were bent on defeating Ācārya in the debate by hook or crook and came upon a plan for the purpose. They challenged him to explain Mahānāmni mantra and its application. The Mantra is related to Mahāvratā, delineated in Aitareya Brāhmaṇa and Āraṇyaka. Being Yājñikas they thought that they would defeat Ācārya who was only an expert in Jñānakāṇḍa but not in Karmakāṇḍa, which was their special forte. But Ācārya, without even a moment's hesitation, thoroughly explained the Brāhmaṇa and Āraṇyaka in relation to Mahānāmni mantra and its application thereby astounding his challengers, who accepted their defeat and surrendered to his superior wisdom. Ācārya got his discourse written down by his disciples. That came to be well known as Khaṇḍārthanirṇaya or Karmanirṇaya. This work, which achieves a synthesis of Jñānakāṇḍa and Karmakāṇḍa, has a unique place among all Vedic literature. It is however unfortunate that critics have not



given due attention to this revolutionary book which erased the blind belief of the traditionalists.

With regard to arriving at the meaning of the Vedas Ācārya has propounded an important theory in this work:

**rūḍhi-yogau vinā kaścinnaiivārtho vedago bhavet |  
tatṛapi yougiko mukhyaḥ sarvatrāsti sa vaidike ||**

‘In interpreting the Vedas in addition to the meaning accepted by tradition the etymological meaning should be taken into consideration. The etymological meaning itself is of utmost importance in understanding the Vedas.’ The word ‘Agni’ does not just mean fire in the Vedic context. The significance of the world lies in taking it as Aga + ni which means that which gives the power of movement to the universe, which in truth is not capable of autonomous movement and is dependent on an external force. The Veda, as a whole, if interpreted on the basis of etymology, reveals in various ways the virtues of the divine.

This theory becomes the guiding principle for studying the whole of Vedic literature from a new point of view. Nārāyaṇapaṇḍitācārya, the biographer of Madhvācārya says about the context of the composition of this rare work:

**ābhāntam pariṣadi matsarādā-prcchat |  
karmārtha-śrutigahanārtha-khaṇḍabhāvam || [Ma.vi.16-42]  
tasyārtham vacanacayasya tam bruvāṇaḥ |  
sthairyārtham sapadi vilekhayāmbabhūva || [16-45]**

“Being jealous of Ācārya who came out victorious in the debate the scholars of Ujire engaged him in an argument about the Vedic meaning of the difficult text of Karmakāṇḍa. Ācārya explained its true meaning and got it written for the sake of confirming it.

## 8-17. Commentaries on the ten Upaniṣats

Ten are the best known of the Upaniṣadic literature. All religious prophets have accepted them as Upaniṣat prasthāna. Ācārya has written commentaries on all these ten Upaniṣats. Nārāyaṇapaṇḍitācārya says the following about these works:

**daśopaniṣado devīrdevā iva samīpsitāḥ |  
yuktāḥ prasādayantīyarthā eṣu bhāṣyālayeṣyalaṃ || [Ma.vi. 5-84]**

“The meanings recorded in these commentaries will please the deities of Upaniṣats and they are sure to like the lover of their liking.”

1. The first of the Upaniṣats commented upon here is the Aitareyopaniṣad that belongs to a section of the Ṛg-Veda. This was the favorite Upaniṣat of Ācārya. Hence he has written quite an extensive commentary on this. As he wrote on the entire Upaniṣat part of the Āraṇyaka this Upaniṣat is also called Mahaitareyopaniṣat. This Upaniṣat, which stresses the view that all names are the names of God, has not been explained by any other commentator so lucidly as by Madhvācārya. All the other commentators have given the dictionary meanings of the Mantras, but Ācārya gives the rare etymological meaning and thus opens an entirely new world before us.

In the beginning of his commentary Ācārya himself has said thus about this Upaniṣat:

**sā bahvṛcaiḥ prapaṭitā caturānanāsyād  
yasyām rahasyamuditāni paramam hi viṣṇoḥ |**

“This Aitareyopaniṣad descended from Brahmadeva to the lineage of seers. The followers of Ṛg-veda made its study a part of their tradition. The most mysterious powers of the Nārāyaṇatva have been presented here.”

2. Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad is the second of these Upaniṣats, belonging to the SuklayajurVeda. Even for this beautiful Upaniṣad Ācārya has written an elaborate commentary. About the origin of this upaniṣad Ācārya says in the beginning of his commentary:

**vājirūpeṇa sūryeṇa proktam vājasaneyakam |  
kaṇvāya yājñavalokyódāt kāṇvam tena prakīrtitam ||**

“Lord Sūrya imparted this Upaniṣat to Yājñavalkya, who imparted it to Kaṇvamuni. Since then this has acquired the name Kāṇvopaniṣat and has remained in the tradition of seers’.

3. The third Upaniṣat is Chāndogyaopaniṣat of the Sāmaveda. This is also a large Upaniṣat. At the beginning of his commentary on this Upaniṣad Ācārya says the following about its background:

**hayagrīva-mukhodgīrṇa-gīrbhirdevam ramāpatim |  
astuvad viṣṭṛta-gunam bhogiprastara-śāyinaṃ ||**

“These are the utterances that came from the Hayagrīva form of God. With these words Ramādevi praised her virtuous lord when he lay on the bed of serpent.”

4. The fourth Upaniṣat is Talavakāropaniṣad, belonging to the Sāmaśākha. Ācārya has filled the commentary on this Upaniṣat with statements which are wholly epistemological in nature. For a long time the identity of the dialogue, which form this Upaniṣat had remained unknown. That Brahma and Rudra were the participants in the question-answer sessions is revealed from the statement of evidence given by Madhvācārya himself:

**vaijayante samāśīnamekānte caturānanam |  
viṣṇor-vividīṣustatvam paryapṛcchat sadāśivah ||**

5. The fifth Upaniṣad is Kāṭhakopaniṣad, which belongs to the Kāṭhaśākha of YajurVeda. This is the famous Upaniṣad with the episode of Naciketa. Till Ācārya wrote a commentary on this

Upaniṣat, the third question of Naciketa had remained a Gordian knot. It was believed that the question was about whether life would exist after death. That was the meaning with which all other commentators explained this question. Nobody had thought about the absurdity of putting this question to Yama himself, who rules the world where all individuals are believed to go after death. For the first time Madhvācārya raised objection to this traditional explanation and rejected it.

**"na ca mṛtvā yamam prāptasya naciketaso mṛto~sti nāsti veti saṁśayo~sti"**

What Ācārya intends to mean here is this: “There cannot be any doubt in the mind of Naciketa regarding the existence of Jīva (being) after death, because on account of his father’s curse he gave up his physical existence and presented himself before Yama. His question therefore is not about the existence of life after death but about the existence of the divine power. The question discussed here, according to Ācārya, is not the existence of the Jīva that has freed itself from the body, but about the relationship between liberated Jīva and the Divine.

6. The sixth is Taittirīyopaniṣad, another Upaniṣad belonging to the Kṛṣṇayajurveda. For the first time Ācārya conclusively argued with evidences that the five varieties of Upāsana or worship refer to the worship of the five forms of Nārāyaṇa and and five forms of life forces viz. Prāṇa, Apāna etc:

**nārāyaṇādi-rūpāṇi lokādiṣu ca pañcasu |  
aniruddhāvasānāni dhīyeyāni caturātmanā ||**

Nārāyaṇa, Vāsudeva, Saṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna, Aniruddha-these are the five images that should be meditated upon in this five-faceted world. That is why this world is called Prapañca. (Pañca-five).

7. The seventh is the Ātharvaṇopaniṣad. This is also called Muṇḍakopaniṣad. The way in which Ācārya lays bare the very heart of this Upaniṣat which discusses both the spiritual and worldly knowledge is unparalleled.

**ṛgādyā aparā vidyā yadā viṣṇorna vācakāḥ |  
tā eva paramā vidyā yadā viṣṇostu vācakāḥ ||**

'There are no two separate branches of books dealing with spiritual knowledge and secular knowledge as such. In a way every kind of knowledge is spiritual, as well as secular, Depending on our mindset. If we use the Vedas to understand the spirit of the universe, it becomes a spiritual pursuit. If on the other hand we use it to our selfish ends it becomes secular or worldly'.

8. Ṣatpraśnopaniṣat is the eighth Upaniṣad belonging to the AtharvaVeda. Ācārya has written this as a string of evidential quotations from other works, excepting just a few sentences of his own. He concludes his commentary with firm conclusion that even in the state of Mukti or salvation the Jīva or Ātman retains his identity and remains under the shelter of the Supreme Being:

**tasmāt sarva-muktebhyo~pyuttamottamottamaḥ |  
paripūrṇo nārāyaṇa iti siddham ||**

9. The ninth Upaniṣad is the Yājñīyamantropiṣad of Sukla-yajurVeda. This is also known as Īśāvāsyopaniṣad or Īśopaniṣad. This is small in size but great in its importance like the commentary which is a dwarf in size but enormous in significance. Here also we can see the revolutionary attitude of Ācārya. The earlier commentators had considered the word Īśāvāsyam as two separate words ĪśāVāsyam. Ācārya said that it is one word Īśāvāsyam which means the abode of God and is most appropriate in meaning.

10. The tenth Upaniṣad, the Māṇḍūkopaniṣad, again belongs to the AtharvaVeda. There was a common false belief that the Kārikas of this Upaniṣad were written by Gauḍapāda. Ācārya wrote commentary on the Kārikas and asserted that they are a part of the Upaniṣad itself. The rare elucidation of the forms of divine which control the states of wakefulness, dream and deepsleep is the unique contribution of Ācārya.

**paramātmā catūrūpaḥ sarvapraṇi-śarīragāḥ |  
viśvaśca taijasaḥ prājñaḥ turīyaśceti kathyate ||**

## 18. Brahmasūtrabhāṣyam

Ācārya wrote this work in Badari. There could be no rival to this book of commentary which holds so much meaning in such brief and succinct expressions. The style of the commentary adopted by Madhvācārya in giving the meaning of the sūtras in brief sentences which themselves have the form of sūtras and of supporting the explanations with evidences from earlier works is a style which is highly suitable for a bhāṣya or commentary. Ācārya wrote this commentary after studying 21 other commentaries which had been extant earlier. This is therefore the 22<sup>nd</sup> commentary written on the Brahmasūtras.

Ācārya has rejected all the previous commentaries on the Brahmasūtras. He has discovered meanings which had not occurred to the earlier commentators. While the other commentators based their arguments on the statements of the ten Upaniṣats only, Ācārya has extended the scope of his interpretation to the whole of Vedic literature. Many of the Śr-utis, which he has given as illustrations, have been forgotten in the Vedic tradition. This was a task which could be accomplished only by a versatile genius like. His illustrations are not just from one or two sources, but the whole range of Vedic literature:

Purāṇas, Tantrāgamas, Itihāsas and Srutis. He has marshaled all the evidences as required by the context, synthesized them all and convinced us with his revelation of a common principle underlying all of them which is expressed in a nutshell in the aphorism ‘Gati sāmānyāt’.

Ācārya indeed boldly rejects the earlier interpretations of the Brahmasūtras but his attack is never on the personal level. He never mentions any names as such, but makes a general criticism. See a model of his criticism: **nānyathā tadadr̥ṣṭeh |**

“Those who interpret the Sūtras in any other way fail to do them justice. They apply to them meanings with the force of their imagination, meanings which do not seem to be natural in the context.”

**na cānyat kalpyam apramāṇakatvāt |**

“There are others who have given various interpretation to these Sūtras. But they are only figments of imagination. These meanings have no epistemological support. Those who have given these interpretations cannot provide an epistemological base”.

This could apply to any of the other critics, they could identify themselves. But Ācārya never resorted to personal attack or criticism. This was not necessary for a person of his eminence.

As desired by Ācārya himself his favourite disciple Trivikramapaṇḍita wrote a commentary by the name, ‘Tatvadīpikā’, for the sake of elucidating Ācārya’s commentary. He has highlighted the rare insights of Ācārya in his commentary. Ācārya has given in a nutshell the essence of the four sections of Brahmasūtra using the four adjectives of his initial incantatory verse.

**nārāyaṇam guṇaiḥ sarvair-udīrṇam doṣavarjitam |**  
**jñeyam gamyam gurūṇi ścāpi natvā sūtrātha ucyate ||**

- 1) All varieties of literature with true knowledge unanimously extol only God; therefore he holds all virtues.
- 2) The several opinions, contrary to this, have developed because of ignorance. God, who is not affected by any of these objections, is without any kind of defect.
- 3) Those who engage themselves in spiritual exercise, as described in the section on Sādhana, those who are true devotees, will realize the divine reality.
- 4) As a result of his incessant spiritual exercise the devotee, inwardly, gets the company of God.

Nārāyaṇapaṇḍita has written highly appreciative words about this commentary:

**bālasaṅghamapi bodhayad bhr̥ṣam**  
**durnirūpavacanam ca paṇḍitaiḥ |**  
**aprameya-hṛdayam prasādat**  
**soumyakānti ca vipakṣa-bhīṣaṇam || [Ma.vi. 9, 10]**

“Simple language which can be understood even by children, but with depth of meaning unfathomable even to scholars, clarity of style, emotional depth which increases in proportion to one’s increasing effort, speech which is soft and mellifluous, yet daring and which can unnerve all his opponents- this is what we find in the pages of this authentic commentary on this remarkable book Brahmasūtra.”

## 19. Sarvaśāstrārthasaṅgrahaḥ

This is also known by other names like Saṅgraha, Aṇubhāṣya and AṇuVedānta. This is also a small work giving the gist of

Brahmasūtra. In a few words or utterances of this work the substance of a whole chapter is condensed. Sometimes a single word is capable of condensing the sense of several sections of the original work. This is a valuable guide to the understanding of the Brahmasūtra.

**viṣṇureva vijijñāsyah sarvakartā~gamoditaḥ ||**

“Only God deserves to be understood by meditation. Only He is at the origin of all existence. He is the only one admired by all the Scriptures.”

Thus continues the tenor of the description. Each adjective used here is apparently simple but when we start pondering over it we realize how it incorporates each of the sections of the Brahmasūtra and proceeds to its succinct analysis. That is why NārāyaṇaPaṇḍitācārya extols the work in the following words:

**ananto~rthaḥ prakāṭitastvayā~nau bhāṣya-saṅgraha |  
aho ātma-parijñaptiyai kṛṣṇenevā~nanāntare ||**

To reveal the truth about himself ŚrīKṛṣṇa opened his mouth and showed the whole universe contained in it. In the same way Madhvācārya contained in this small work of his unlimited extent of meaning. This figurative expression is the most appropriate one, as far as the description of this work is concerned.

## 20. Anuvyākhyāna

Ācārya composed this in response to the urging by his favourite disciple Trivikramapaṇḍita. This contains stanzas logically defending the principle of Brahmasūtra. About the background of the writing of this tactically exacting work Śrīmadhvavijaya says as follows:

**aparo~piśyate~smābhir-grantheṣveteṣu satsvapi |  
satsvapīndrādiṣu purā tārakārivamaraiḥ ||**

**granthebhya ebhyo~gādhebhya yuktayo no duruddharāḥ |  
manomāndyāt tato grantham vyakta-tarka-tatim kuru ||  
ityarthito vyadhānmadhvaḥ so~nuvyākhyām satām sudhām |  
durvādigarvādrīpavim māyidhvāntaravidyutim ||**

Trivikramapaṇḍita is said to have once come to Madhvācārya and made the following appeal: “You have authored many works abounding in philosophical aphorisms. In spite of this we would like you to write another work. It is beyond our mediocre competence to get into the depth of all your works and understand the intricacies of the theological ideas presented there. We would request you to write a book elucidating all aspects of logic for the benefit of all of us.”

Ācārya agreed to comply with this request. The result was Anuvyākhyāna, excelling in intricate logic. In smashing the arguments of all pervert challengers it is like the Vajrāyudha (a club-like weapon attributed to Lord Indra) which smashes the tops of mountains. In dispelling all the effects of Māyāvāda it is like the rays of the sun which dissipates all darkness. According to Nārāyaṇapanitācārya the study of this book, for all good people, is like tasting ambrosia, from heaven. Prompted perhaps by this very appellation, Jayatīrtha, called his commentary on Madhvācārya’s work Nyāyasudha. The position of ‘Nyāyasudhā’ remains supreme among all the commentaries written about Madhva’s works. About Anuvyākhyāna, its commentator Jayatīrtha makes the following eulogy, which is absolutely fair about the book. “**anuvyākhyāna-naḥline-cañcarīkati me manaḥ**”. This means, “my mind switches like a bee on the lotus of Anuvyākhyāna which blossoms in the clear-water lake of the mind of Ācārya.”

Ācārya himself gives a warning about the expanse of the meaning of this monumental work:

**grantho~yamapi bahvartho bhāṣyam cātyarthavistaram |  
bahuñā eva jānanti viśeṣanāthametayoh ||**

“This Anuvyākhyāna is laden with multiple meanings. The Brahmasūtrabhāṣya is also endowed with multiple meanings. Nobody should entertain the belief that whatever is seen superficially is the ultimate meaning. Only those who are well-versed in Sāstras can dive into the depth of the meaning of these two books.”

As usual Ācārya got this work also written by his disciples. There is also something special to be mentioned in this context. It appears he got his four disciples to sit in a row and simultaneously dictated the four parts of his work for them to take down. To dictate a text in verse to even one scribe on the spur of the moment is a miraculous feat. To compose four different series of verses related to four different themes and to get them written down by four different scribes is beyond our imagination. This overwhelmingly incredulous incident is recorded in Śrī Madhvavijaya:

**yugapad racayannenām kadācit sa nīrantaram |  
caturaścaturāḥ śiṣyān līlayā~lekhayat khalu || [15-89]**

Ācārya’s genius for composition and his memory are both astounding. His scholarship was Olympian in heights. Let alone going on top of this mountain, even to view it from a distance with raised eyes was difficult for the ordinary person. This was perhaps one of the reasons why his doctrines did not enjoy the honour and fame that it deserved.

This Anuvyākhyāna is a rare treasure of philosophical tenets. But though he speaks from such heights, it is significant that he speaks words which are close to our experience. It may not be an exaggeration to say that no other religious saint of India gave so

much importance to self-experience as Madhvācārya did. He says at one point of Anuvyākhyāna:

**śāstrārthayuktānubhavaḥ pramāṇam tūttamam matam |**

“The evidence of Sāstras is no doubt important. But only to learn the statements in the scriptures would be good enough for a quotation. Only when we personalize the statement of the scriptures through experience it becomes the best evidence.”

The knowledge of Scriptures without the support of experience means just arid scholarship. Experience without the knowledge of the scriptures is blind worldliness. Hence Ācārya’s injunction to us is that we should harmonize both and develop a sense of integration free from conflict. This is to be remembered in all ages. In today’s world, when everything is denied but only the individual is bloated the words of Ācārya might be a source of rejuvenation to the people who are forlorn.

To a possible question why, in spite of such a spirited defence of the well-established ancient truth, so many different faiths have survived in the world, Ācārya has given a very satisfactory answer:

**daurlabhyād-śuddha-buddhinām bāhulyād-ālpavedinām |  
durāgraha-grhītatvāt vartante samayāḥ sadā ||**

“People who are capable of thinking clearly, dispassionately and without prejudice are always rare in any age. It is those who know only unbaked ideas and who flaunt their half-baked knowledge that form the majority in this world. Besides this everybody tends to believe that the religion into which he has been born is the best of all religions of the world. Thus however much you might proclaim the superiority of truth there will always be some untruth that cannot be wholly erased. So, all religions exist in all the ages.”

It is always refreshing to read such words of experience and wisdom in the work of Ācārya. But before enjoying this thrill one has to develop the ability to digest and absorb the hard nut.

## 21. Nyāyavivaraṇa

This is the fourth book written by Madhvācārya on Brahmasūtra. This may also be considered as an appendix to Anuvyākhyāna. In Anuvyākhyāna Ācārya has summarized the objections and replies given in each section of Brahmasūtra. The same arguments of the opponents and defenders is given in Nyāyavivaraṇa with additional explanation including the statements of the theme. Therefore the book is also called 'Anuvyākhyāna-nyāya-vivaraṇa-mālikā'. Madhvavijaya has the following eulogy to say about the book:

**yuktāyā yuktimālāyāḥ proktāyāstatra cā~tmanā |  
vyaktam cakre vivaraṇam kavīndraireṣa duṣkaram || [15-90]**

“The well-presented logical argument of Anuvyākhyāna is lucidly explained here by Ācārya. Whatever may be the eminence of other scholars, none of them can as lucidly compose a commentary on Anuvyākhyāna”.

Ācārya himself says at the end of the book:

**aham tu tat-prasādaikamahāspada-baloddhataḥ |  
nyāyāmṛtārṇavamimam-avagāhya vibhajya ca |  
saṅkṣepa-vistarābhyāni ca cakara vyākṛtīm kṛtīm ||**

“I am proud of my strength which is the result of God’s infinite grace. With this strength I was able to dive deep into this ocean of logic, assess its depth and expanse and I was able to write an effective commentary on this book. There is nothing that is impossible for the devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa.”

## 22-30. Nine Books with Prakaraṇa

1. Viṣṇutatva-nirṇaya: This is the most important of all the books of Prakaraṇa written by Ācārya in terms of its size and the range of its subjects. In the very opening stanza he elucidates the subjects that are going to be handled in the book:

**sadāgamaikavijñeyam samatīta-kṣarākṣaram |  
nārāyaṇam sadā vande nirdoṣāśeṣa-sadguṇam ||**

One of the attributes of Nārāyaṇa is that he is mainly delineated in all the scriptures. He is the only one Supreme Being who is beyond the finite world characterized by both perishable and imperishable realities. This is another of his attributes. The third attribute is that he is a reality void of all defects and full of all attributes. The three chapters of the book prove with concrete evidences the appropriateness of the above statements.

Of these the first chapter is very extensive. This deals in detail with various subjects like the divine origin of the Vedas, the permanence of Varṇas, the reality of the world etc. Madhvācārya defends his reality of duality of Jīva and Īsvara with all the three kinds of evidence: Pratyakṣa (directly perceived), Anumāna (logic) and Āgama (scriptural). Incidentally here is an extensive attack on Māyāvāda or the philosophy of illusion. This book, which contains all subjects presented in a brief but clear manner, like an ambrosia for the seekers of Mādhva philosophy.

Nārāyaṇapaṇḍitācārya describes the greatness of this book in his Madhvavijaya in this manner:

**ekāki kila yaścakre padam mauliṣu vidviṣām |  
tatvanirṇaya pārtho~yam kena nāma na pūjyate || [15-80]**

“This work is Arjuna, who can single-handedly challenge even a swarm of opponents. The work can excel all the books that have

appeared on the subject. Who will desist from paying respects to a work like this”.

2. Vāda (This is also called Tattvodyota): This is another book of Prakaraṇa. This was written in Ekavāṭa of Kāsaragod.

There is a legend behind the writing of this book:

There was a collection of Ācārya's work in Viṣṇumaṅgaḷa of Kāsaragod. Saṅkara Paṇḍita, younger brother of Trivikrama-Paṇḍita used to look after the books. Once a sage called Padmañirtha from Coḷa kingdom got the works of Ācārya stolen out of jealousy.

Ācārya, who was then in Uḍupi, came to know this. He came to Kāsaragod. In a place called Ekavāṭa, he came upon Padmañirtha and accosted him. “By stealing my book you cannot erase my Tatvavāda from the world. It is imprinted in the hearts of people.”

Padmañirtha answered with his characteristic intolerance, “If you can prove your so called new theory I challenge you for a debate. You may invite interlocutors and arrange for debate. If you win let us see what can be done next.” Ācārya said, “I don't have any itching for a debate. If you so desire, you may very well arrange for one. I am prepared for it any time.” Padmañirtha said, “I too don't need a debate. There is no need to establish the Advaita theory with any debate. It has already spread far and wide in the country and is very popular.” Madhvācārya replied smilingly: “My Tatvavāda is known all over the three worlds.” Padmañirtha tried to retort with: “Oh what a world famous theory is yours! The tenor of your theory is known only to the Lord of the mind!” It was now Ācārya's turn to retort, “So, you yourself agree God is seated in the mind of man. You have accepted my theory.” Though crestfallen, Padmañirtha challenged him for a debate.

The debate that was held on this occasion was taken down by Ācārya's disciples. Hence the book came to be known as "Vāda" (Debate).

In this book Madhvācārya has critically compared the Māyāvāda (Theory of Illusion) of the Advaita faith with the SūnyaVāda (Theory of Nothingness) of Buddhism. With evidences marshaled from original works he conclusively proves that Advaita has been profoundly influenced by Buddhism. Advaita, with its base in Buddhism, has no independent basis at all. The Māyāvāda is nothing but Buddhism with a Vedic mask. In his strongly worded criticism Madhvācārya says:

**na ca sūnyavādinah sakāśād vailakṣaṇyam māyāvādinah |  
na ca nirviśeṣabrahmavādinah sūnyāt kaścit viśeṣastasya ||**

“In no way can the Advaitis, the followers of Māyāvāda (Theory of Illusion) be different from the Sūnyavādis or Buddhists. “Buddhists deny the existence of Brahma and believe in Nothingness. One may say, Advaitis believe in Brahma, so there is a difference between them. But in truth this difference does not exist, because the Brahma of Māyāvāda is non-existent, he is formless. So Brahma is nothing but the name given to the Buddhist concept of Nothingness. The nomenclature is different but the concept referred to is the same. The Brahma of Māyāvāda can not be distinguished from the concept of Nothingness of the Buddhists. If the proponents of Māyāvāda attribute any characteristic to Brahma he cannot be without a quality, cannot be without a character, can not be formless.”

Today all critics agree that Buddhism has had a powerful influence on Advaita philosophy. But it was Madhvācārya who first recognized this and recorded it in his work.



3. Māyāvāda-dūṣaṇa: This also is a small book. This also attacks briefly but succinctly the Māyāvāda or the Advaita theory:

**ajñānā-sambhavādeva tanmatamakhilam-apākṛtam |**

“(It is claimed by Advaita that) Brahman has no attribute of ignorance and that no Jīva exists different from Brahman. The question arises as to whose attribute it is to be ignorant. Till this question is satisfactorily answered there is no basis for argument that the knowledge of Advaita dispels ignorance.” Thus Madhvācārya states his criticism of Māyāvāda. This book is also called Māyāvādakhaṇḍana.

4. Upādhi-dūṣaṇa: This Prakaraṇagrantha is a supplement to Māyāvāda-dūṣaṇa. This is also known as Upādhi-khaṇḍana.

This book rejects the effort of Māyāvāda to defend ignorance in Jīva on the ground of Upādhi. Ācārya argues with effective logic that Upādhi can at best describe a difference but can not create one where there is none.

**vidyamānasya bhedasya jñāpako naiva kārakaḥ |  
upādhir-dṛṣṭapūrvo hi khe~pi deśāntarasya saḥ |  
jñāpako vidyamānasya mūḍha-buddhivyapekṣayā ||**

5. Mithyātvānumāna-dūṣaṇa: This is a continuation of the last Prakaraṇa, and is also known as Mithyātvānumāna-khaṇḍana. Ācārya strongly condemns the theory of Māyāvāda that says that the world is unreal because it is the creation of an illusion. Just as we should not deny the existence of God, we should not deny the existence of the world which God has created. As one removes a thorn with the help of a thorn, using effective logic he challenges the argument that the world is illusory and proves that it is real.

**vimatam satyam pramāṇa dṛṣṭatvāt  
yadittham tat kathā yathā~tmā**

“This world as perceived by evidence should be recognized as true. Otherwise how should one accept the Ātma (soul) as true? What can the Māyāvādīs reply if the one Ātma they accept is also an illusion?”

The three books, in all about three pages in length, are known as Dūṣaṇatraya or Khaṇḍanatraya.

6. Tatvasaṅkhāyana: This is the sixth Prakaraṇa work, containing just twelve stanzas, classifying objects and numbering the elements exactly. This is not an independent work of Ācārya. According to the earlier versions of the manuscript this is a string of important quotations from an ancient work of the name Tatvasaṅkhāyana. Ācārya is the compiler. A sample śloka is below:

**svatantram-asvatantram ca dvividham tatvamiṣyate |  
svatanthro bhagavān viṣṇuḥ-bhāvobhāvo dvidhetarat ||**

“Basically there are two realities in this world: independent and dependent. Only Lord Nārāyaṇa is the independent reality. Everything else is dependent. The dependence also has two types: bhāva and abhāva. Even the existence of Bhāva is classified into two: Cetana and Acetana (living and non-living).

7. Tatvaviveka: This is another work which classifies objects. With only eleven ślokas this is even smaller than Tatvasaṅkhāyana. According to Jayatīrtha this is selection from an earlier work of the same name Tatvaviveka. Though the details of Tatvasaṅkhāyana are available here, some of the ambiguities have remained. For this very reason it has maintained its individuality and separate existence.

**ya etat paratantram ca sarvameva hareḥ sadā |  
vaśamityeva jānāti samsārānmucyate hi saḥ ||**

“The whole of this dependent world will always be subordinate to God who is an absolutely independent reality. He who knows this will free himself of the shackles of the world.

About these six Prakaraṇas Nārāyaṇa Paṇḍitācārya has the following to say:

**vādādayaḥ prakaraṇa-sphuliṅgāstanavo~pyalam |**

**vipakṣa-kakṣam kṣiṇvanti mārutena tvayeritāḥ || [Ma.vi.15-81]**

“Prakaraṇagranthas like Vāda (Tatvodyota) are small in size but these sparks of fire, aided by the wind-like Madhvācārya can burn down whole forests of opponents.

8. Pramāṇalakṣaṇa: If Tatvasaṅkhyāna and Tatvaviveka discuss ontology, the Prakaraṇagrantha by name Pramāṇalakṣaṇa deals with epistemology. This small book, also just three pages in size, reviews all the preceding epistemological arguments and presents a new model of epistemology. According to Ācārya Pramāṇa is of two kinds: Kevala Pramāṇa and Anupramāṇa Knowledge is Kevala Pramāṇa. The sources of knowledge: Pratyakṣa (perception), Anumāna (logic) and Śabda (scripture). These are Anupramāṇas. Other authors identified Arthāpatti and Upamāna also as Pramāṇas. Madhvācārya rejects this with sound arguments and establishes that the sources of knowledge are just three as stated above.

In the category of Pratyakṣa, 'Sākṣipratyakṣa' is a discovery by Ācārya.

**pratyakṣami saptavidham | sākṣi-ṣaḍindriyabhedenā |**

“The eye perceives the knowledge of form, the ear that of sound, the nose that of smell, the palate the knowledge of taste and the skin gets the knowledge of touch. What is perceived by the mind is the sixth kind of knowledge and the experience of the

sākṣindriya is the seventh kind of perceived knowledge. Thus the perceived kinds of knowledge are seven.”

9. Vādalakṣaṇa: This has an alternative name of Kathālakṣaṇa. The traditional version of this small work has 32 stanzas; according to the commentary of Jayatīrtha it contains 24 stanzas. This deals extensively with the method of organizing philosophical debates and the rules that should govern such debates.

**vādo jalpo vitandeti trividhā viduṣām kathā |**

“The debates held among scholars are of three kinds: Vāda, Jalpa and Vitandā”.

The discussion between a Guru and his disciple or the debate between two seekers of knowledge held dispassionately is the proper debate Vāda. There is no question of anyone being defeated or becoming victorious. A contest between two scholars in the form of a debate is Jalpa. If one wins the opponent gets defeated. To manipulate facts and to hide the truth in order to defeat an undeserving opponent using his own tricks as a boomerang is Vitandā. Here also victory and defeat is the outcome.

Thus we get in this book a beautiful picture of the kind of debate that used to happen in the past between participants.

About the above two Prakaraṇas Nārāyaṇa-ṇḍitācārya says:

**lokānāmaivalokāya mārḡasyāsyā vyadhād bhavān |**

**karuṇākara netrābhe vādasanmāna lakṣaṇe || [Ma.vi.15-76]**

“In order that people might get an idea of Pramāṇas and the procedure of Vāda the gracious Ācārya authored two works Pramāṇalakṣaṇa and Vādalakṣaṇa which are like two eyes on the face of any person.

### 31. Kṛṣṇāmṛtamahārṇava

This work with a selection 229 ślokaś, is in a way, a distillation of the essence of all the Purāṇas. This is delightful feast not only to the students of Purāṇas but also to the lovers of poetry.

As an example the following verse from a Purāṇa:

**nārāyaṇeti nāmāsti vāgasti vaśavartinī |  
tathāpi narake ghore patantīyetad-adbhutam ||**

“There is great Lord Nārāyaṇa and our tongue does any of our biddings. Still people descend into the horrible pit of the Nether World! This is indeed an inexplicable mystery of the world.” Thus Yama is said to have exclaimed.

Madhvavijaya describes the background of the composition of this work in the following words:

**kṣetrāgryam tribhuvana-vaidyanāthanātham  
prasthāya pracuratarāntaraḥ prabhāvi |  
śrīkṛṣṇāmṛta-paramārṇavābhīdhānam  
cakre sadvacanatatimī svabhaktabhūtyai ||**

Ācārya is said to have once paid a visit to the holy centre of Vaidyanātheśvara of Kokkada village. Edapadittāya of the place was an ardent devotee of Ācārya. In compliance with his request, as a means of promoting his success and welfare Ācārya wrote this compilation of important quotations from Purāṇas.

### 32. Tantrasārasaṅgrahaḥ

With its 400 ślokaś contained in four sections this book is the most important of the works of Tantra literature in Sanskrit. The variety of themes handled here is astounding.

The first section contains the alphabet, description of Omkāra, Aśtamahāmantras and details of the methods of different forms of

daily worship. The second section describes the measurements of Kuṇḍa (pit in which fire sacrifice is performed), the procedure of installing sacrificial fire, the procedure of the Homa ritual.

The third section is of great significance. This describes the procedure of consecrating a temple, the ritual of Brahmakalāśa and consecrating a new image of a deity in the temple, details of organizing a festival etc. There is also a comprehensive description of the art of sculpture (of temple deities in particular) and temple architecture. Ācārya has given minute details about the relative measurements of the sculpture or the architecture, from toe to tuft. This is of invaluable service not only to temple architects and priests, but also to sculptors in general. Such a work giving accurate and succinct information about the art of Sculpture and Architecture is rare in the whole Sanskrit literature. This could very well be prescribed as a text book in any school of Architecture.

In the fourth section Ācārya has given about 70 Mahāmantras. This is followed at the end by descriptions of the procedures of Mantra, Japa, Dhyāna, Yantra, (preparing a talisman), ritual of Homa etc. To summarize this book has a unique place in Tāntric studies. Nārāyaṇa Paṇḍita has the following words to say in praise of this book:

**kastantrasāraṁ samprāpya na syāt paryāptavāñchitaḥ |  
amarairāśritacchāyāṁ kalpadrumamivottamam || [Ma.vi.15-78]**

In the last part of Tantrasāra, after describing all Mantras and ritualistic procedures Ācārya gives us some reassurance:

**Akurvaṁ śca kriyā bhaktyā nirapekṣo bhajan harim |  
sarvametad-avāpnoti viśeṣeṇa na saṁśayaḥ ||**

“There is no need to be unduly concerned about these observances and rituals. We need not be anxious about how we

are going to find the time or the means to perform all these prescriptions. There need not be any anxiety about missing some of the rituals. Pray to the Lord with utter devotion, without any selfish motive. You deserve more the grace of God than those who engage themselves in observances and rituals hoping for a proportionate reward. Feeling is more important than the ritual. Feelings unattended by rituals are better than rituals unaccompanied by feelings. There need not be any doubt in this.”

### 33. Sadācāra-smṛti

This is a small but very useful work containing just 38 ślokaś describing in detail every day procedures of worship to be held from morning to evening. Ācārya has culled out most of the statements from Purāṇas and woven them together. He has given a very interesting pronouncement on deciding what is Dharma (spiritually justifiable and what is unjustifiable).

**smartavyaḥ satatam viṣṇurvismartavyo na jātucit |  
sarve vidhiniṣedhāḥ syuretayoreva kiṅkarāḥ ||**

“The basic quality of Dharma is to remember the almighty God. Whatever supports this is Dharma. The basic quality of Adharma is to neglect God. Whatever supports this attitude of forgetting God is Adharma.”

### 34. Jayantīkalpa

This is once again a very small work containing just 12 ślokaś. This explains the special way of observing the birth day of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa and the procedure of offering Arghya (performing oblation) to the Lord.

**rohiṇyām-ardharātre tu yadā kālāṣṭamī bhavet |  
jayantī nāma sā proktā sarvapāpa-praṇāśanam ||**

“When Rohiṇīnakṣatra conjoins with midnight of eighth day of the darker fortnight that is the moment of observing the appearance day of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Observance of this holy event is capable of absolving us of all the effects of evil deeds. This work is also called Jayantīnirṇaya.

### 35. Om-tat-sat-praṇavakalpa

This small work, containing 25 ślokaś describes the procedure of a Guru granting Mantropadeśa (guidance in chanting sacred Mantras) to the disciple who has accepted celibacy as the state of his life, and administering to him the oath of abstinence. It deals with the guarded principles of the life of an ascetic, like meditating on the eight forms of the almighty lord, using the eight sounds of Omkāra. The last message of the Guru to the disciple who has taken the oath of a life of abstinence is this:

**tadarthān brahmasūtraiśca samyaṇ nirṇīya tatvataḥ |  
viṣṇoḥ sarvottamatvam tu sarvadā pratipādaya ||**

“Be constantly engaged in the study of the Vedas and Purāṇas. Understand their real meaning with the help of Brahmasūtras and proclaim all times the supremacy of Lord Śrīhari.”

As the work contains the details of giving Praṇavopadeśa to a Yati or an ascetic, it is also known as Yatipraṇavakalpa or simply Praṇavakalpa.

### 36. Nyāsapaddhati

This book briefly describes the routine of yatis or sanyāsins. There are only 12 stanzas here. Ācārya enjoins the yatis not to settle in a place for a living but eat what they get in their sojourn as mendicants.

**anekabhikṣācaraṇam mukhyadharmo yateḥ smṛtaḥ |  
tripāṇca-sapta-sadmāni gacchennātaḥ param vrajet ||**

“It is not appropriate for a Yati to receive alms from the same household for himself. (This may cause inconvenience to the householder). It is a greater spiritual duty to gather alms from several households. And the number of houses approached for alms could be three, five or seven at the most. What is collected in this limited number of houses should be shared by the Yati with his disciples.

### 37. Tithinirṇaya

This is a rare astrological treatise with just 28 stanzas. Madhvācārya has explained minute details of calculating the exact ‘Tithi’ or date (of Hindu calendar) by processing the solar and lunar positions.

This contains another significant detail. The date on which the writing of the book commenced is mentioned here in the first stanza.

**bhūśrībhinnācintyonāt kalyahāt kālavardhitāt |  
garuḍadhyeyavākyaṇām tyaktvā sauram vṛthāphalam ||**

[Tithinirṇaya- 2]

When the words are transformed into figures this comes to 4409 years of the Kali era:

$$\frac{16,10,424 \times 31}{11323} = 4409$$

The text means that Ācārya wrote the book in his 70th year. Therefore the exact year of his birth is the 4339<sup>th</sup> year of the Kali era. This book, recently discovered, not only throws light on Ācārya’s astrological accomplishment but also gives the exact year of his birth.

The seven books described before contain guidelines given by Ācārya regarding the proper way of conducting one’s life. The remaining three are invocatory in nature.

### 38. Nakhastuti

In the ancient encyclopedic work by Hṛṣīkeśafīrtha there is only one stanza but in the current version, there are two stanzas. It should be noted that in the second stanza there is no description of the Nakha (nail) as such. The first verse describes the claws of Lord Narasimha after he tears up the entrails of Hiranyakaśipu, the evil one.

**pāntvasmān puruhūta-vairi-balavan-mātaṅga-mādyadghaṭā-  
kumbhoccā dri-vipāṭanādhika-paṭupratyeka-vajrāyitāḥ |  
śrīmatkaṇṭhīravāśya-pratatasunakharā-dāritārātidūra-  
pradhvasta-dhvāntaśānta pravata manasā bhāvitā bhūribhāgaiḥ ||**

In the movement of this verse, in the choice of its metrical form there is a special beauty. The first half of the quatrain is in a metrical form called Sārdūlavikṛīḍita and the second half is in a different metrical pattern called Sragdharā. The entire episode of the annihilation of Hiranyakaśipu at the claws of Narasimha is distributed in this quatrain. The first depicts the attack of Narasimha on Hiranyakṣa. It describes the sport of Narasimha in Sanskrit the kṛīḍa (play or game) of Sārdūla (Lion). The second half in tune with the meaning of the metre Sragdharā shows how Narasimha wears a garland of Hiranyaka’s entrails around his neck. The metre is thus used to represent the theme of the two halves of the verse. This mixing of two metrical movements in one and the same quatrain is the first ever experiment in the whole of Sanskrit literature. That is a unique achievement of Ācārya.

There is a legend behind the composition of this verse:

After the long-drawn debate with Ācārya Trivikrama Pandita was captivated by the erudition of the saint and became his disciple. In the height of this devotional passion he composed a beautiful string of incantatory verses called Vāyustuti depicting the forms of incarnation of the great Ācārya. It is also said that when Ācārya, assuming his three forms (of Vāyu, Bhīma and Madhva) was worshipping Lord Kṛṣṇa Trivikrama Pandita saw him from behind the window and was thrilled by the sight. He composed the poem then and there and presented to his new Guru. Ācārya read it from beginning to end and expressed his view that it was wholly in his praise but not in praise of Lord Śrīhari. Then he composed this Nakshastuti (in honour of Narasimha, an incarnation of Hari) and said that the recital of Nakshastuti first and of Vāyustuti next would do good to the devotees. Since then before and after the recital of Vāyustuti Nakshastuti has been recited by devotees.

### 39. Dwādaśa Stotras (12 Incantations)

These are twelve individual poetic compositions of incantations. They are unique musical compositions which can be set to music and sung. The last six incantations, with their Pallavi and Dhruvapadas, are specially meant to be set to music and recited. Barring Gītagovinda (by Saṅkarācārya) these twelve incantations are the first musical compositions in Sanskrit. Ācārya was a great composer. He was an expert in music. His biography shows that he had even performed several concerts in several places. This poetic composition is a standing example of his accomplishment in music.

For example, we may note the movement of the following verse:

**kuru bhuṅkṣva ca karma nijam niyatam  
haripāda-vinamradhiyā satatam |  
harireva paro harireva guruḥ  
harireva jagat-pitṛ-māṭṛ-gatiḥ ||**

There is again a legend behind the context of composing this poem. It is said that Madhvācārya went on composing and singing these songs, as he brought the idol of ŚrīKṛṣṇa from the beach of Malpe on the Western Coast to Uḍupi.

In truth these are not twelve sections of the same incantatory composition. The colophon at the end and the way of separately denoting them in ancient encyclopedias support the inference that they are twelve independent compositions.

### 40. Kandukastuti

As mentioned earlier according to legend this was composed by Ācārya in his childhood. Hence sometimes this is not included in the list of his original works.

It is said that he composed this poem at the time of playing with the ball. Its rhythm tallies with the rhythm of a bouncing ball. Its musical quality is astounding.

The full text of the song is as follows:

**ambaragaṅgā cumbitapādaḥ  
padatāla-vidalitā-gurutara-śakaṭaḥ |  
kāliya-nāgakṣvela-nihantā  
sarasiya-navadala-vikasita-nayanah ||**

**kālaghanāli-karbura-kāyah  
 śaraśata-śakalita-ripuśata-nivahah |  
 santatam-asmān-pātu murāriḥ  
 satataga-samajava-khagapati-nirataḥ ||**

This consists of units of four mātras (a short syllable has one mātra and a long syllable has two). The movement is of the following pattern: one long syllable followed by two short syllables, then a foot of two long syllables, again one long syllable followed by two short syllables, again a foot of two long syllables. The second line abounding with a whole sequence of short syllables ends with a single long syllable. This is a very fast metrical movement. The next lines have the same pattern. This is an entirely new metrical composition. Perhaps we can call this Kanduka meter!

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